**Medicare Doesn’t Cover Methadone for Opioid Use Disorder**

Persons on methadone face a problem when they reach age 65. Medicare only covers methadone prescribed for pain relief, not opioid use disorder. Medicare Part D does not cover medications that cannot be dispenses in a retail pharmacy. Methadone for opioid treatment can only be dispensed through certified methadone clinics. There are estimated to be 300,000 Medicare patients diagnosed with opioid addiction and nearly 90,00 deemed to be at high risk for overdose.

Buprenorphine, another agonist medication for opioid use disorder is more expensive, but Medicare will cover its costs. However, few physicians who accept Medicare patients are certified to prescribe buprenorphine, as required by law. A recent study found only 81,000 Medicare patients had prescriptions for buprenorphine.

This is no small problem as last year, 1,345 Americans aged 65 and older died of an opioid overdose in 2016. The problem is made worse because many older patients rely on very high doses of methadone for pain relief. Consequently, they are at risk of becoming addicted.

For some elderly persons in need of methadone for opioid use disorder, they can obtain funding through Medicaid. If their income is low enough, they may qualify for state-federal Medicaid Insurance coverage. Medicaid covers methadone treatment in about 36 states.