

# Perspectives on Patient Portal Use Among Patients Treated with Medications for Opioid Use Disorder in Primary Care

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## Introduction

- **Buprenorphine** is an evidence-based treatment for opioid use disorder (OUD) that can be prescribed in the outpatient setting.
  - Patient retention remains a challenge.<sup>1,2</sup>
- **Patient portals** are patient-accessible platforms permitting access to the electronic health record.
  - May improve provider-patient communication and relationship, patient engagement, accuracy and safety, and other markers of health care delivery.<sup>3</sup>
  - Concern amongst health providers regarding patients with substance use disorders (SUD) accessing information via patient portals.<sup>4</sup>

**Our study explores the perspectives of patients with OUD on portal use, with regards to impact on OUD treatment and clinical care.**

## Methods

### Inclusion criteria:

Age 18+, enrolled in outpatient buprenorphine treatment program, activated user of portal, able to complete a verbal interview in English.

### Exclusion criteria:

Patient lack of interest, unable to be interviewed, unable to reach patient.

**55 patients screened** within study period 7/2/18 - 8/29/18  
**17 total interviews conducted**

**High Users:** Logged in once or more in past month. N = 8

**Low Users:** Did not log in at least once in past month. N = 9

**Data collection:**

- Semi-structured interviews
- Audio recordings transcribed
- Data collected until saturation of themes was reached

**Table 1: Demographics**

<b>Average age (range)</b>	42.71 years (27 – 68)	
<b>Sex (n)</b>	Male	12
	Female	5
<b>Racial background (n)</b>	White	13
	Mixed Race	3
	Black	1
<b>Education (n)</b>	≤High school	6
	Some college	8
	College	3
<b>Living situation (n)</b>	Alone	7
	Family	10

**Fig. 1. Interview Guide Domains**

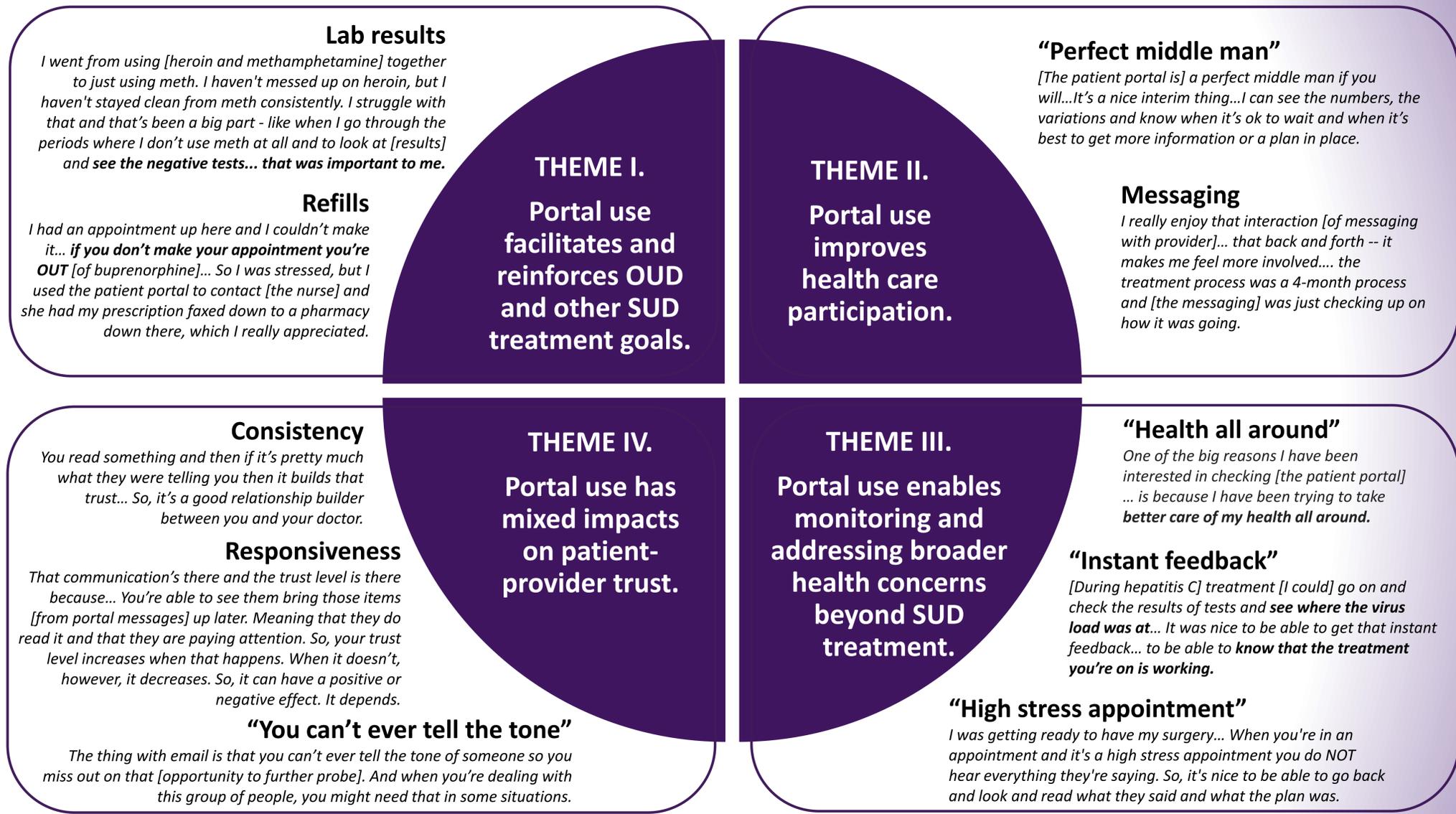


**Data analysis:**

- Thematic analysis using Dedoose qualitative analysis platform
- Interviews coded independently
- Coding discrepancies reconciled via consensus
- Inter-rater reliability testing

## Results

No major thematic differences were found between high and low user groups.



## Discussion

- **Themes suggest that online portals offer substantial benefits for patients with OUD and other SUD**, including increased participation in care, reinforcement of OUD and SUD treatment goals, and the ability to monitor and address broader health concerns.
- The potential impact of online portals on patient-provider trust is multifaceted and merits further investigation and consideration.
- **Limitations** include desirability and recall biases; may not generalize to all OUD patients, particularly outside primary care setting.
- **Future directions** include research to elucidate implications and ethics, solicit provider perspectives, and best practices, as well as reassessment of current thinking and practice around patient portal access to patients with OUD and other SUD.

**References:**

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