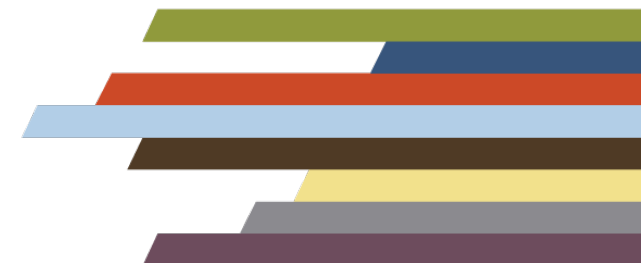




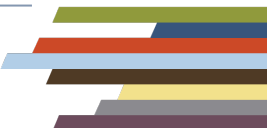
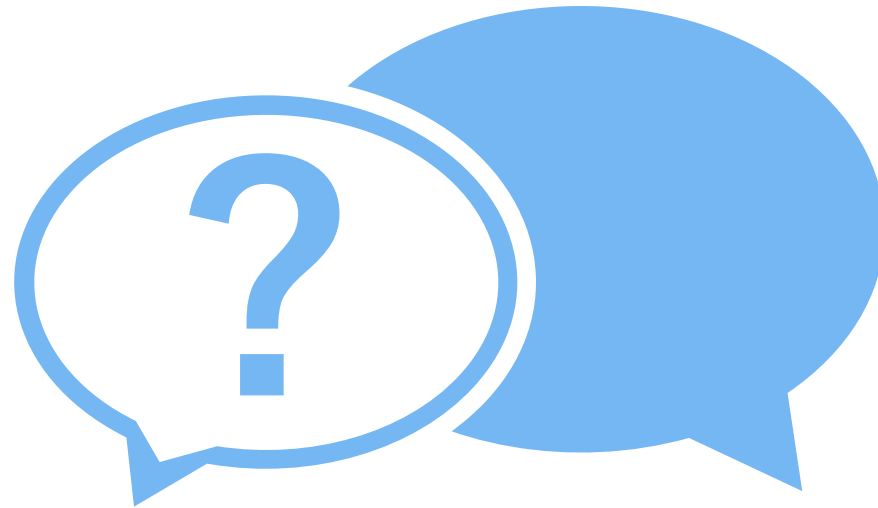
The Northwest & Pacific Southwest ATTCs and the CTN Western States Node present:
**Evidence to Consider When Advising Patients on Buprenorphine
Treatment Duration for Opioid use Disorder**

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Addiction Technology Transfer Center Network
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Evidence to Consider when Advising Patients on Buprenorphine Treatment Duration for Opioid Use Disorder

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Objectives

- Understand the evidence for buprenorphine effectiveness in mortality reduction
- Be able to identify common barriers to buprenorphine retention
- Communicate the results of research on length of treatment exposure and mortality in people who stop buprenorphine treatment
- Consider how to counsel patients who want to stop medications

Retention outcomes in randomized controlled trials of buprenorphine

- >30 studies of sublingual (SL) buprenorphine (or buprenorphine/naloxone)
 - Intervention durations of 2 to 52 weeks
 - Compared SL buprenorphine to methadone, extended-release (XR) naltrexone or placebo
 - Buprenorphine had higher retention than placebo, with dose response
 - Methadone had higher retention rates than SL buprenorphine
 - Similar retention for SL buprenorphine and XR naltrexone
- Extended-release subcutaneous buprenorphine vs. SL buprenorphine
 - Similar retention
 - 24-week retention with fentanyl use (60%) similar to without fentanyl (57%) at 24 weeks

Lee, et al. Lancet. 2018; Mattick, et al. Cochrane Database Syst Rev. 2014; Degenhardt et al Lancet Psych 2023; Nunes et al. JAMA Netw Open, 2024; Lofwall, et al., JAMA Intern Med, 2018; *and others*

Rates of buprenorphine discontinuation variable by setting but generally high

Medicaid: 28% discontinued before 30 days

VA: 38% discontinued within 1 year, 68% within 3 years

Privately insured: 55% discontinued within 1 year

Office-based collaborative treatment: Emerging adults (18-25): 57% at 3 months vs. 22% for older adults

Factors associated with buprenorphine discontinuation

- Medication factors: lower dose and days supply
- Comorbidities: other substance use disorders, higher comorbidity score, chronic pain, hepatitis C
- Higher utilization: Inpatient care, psychiatric hospitalization, emergency dept. visits

Factors associated with buprenorphine retention

- Older age
- Outpatient psychotherapy
- Antidepressant use

Patient preferences and program/policy requirements

- At onset of treatment, >25% do not want to stay on buprenorphine longer than 6 months
- Barriers to retention
 - Life obligations
 - Dissatisfaction with the medication
 - Conflicts with program staff
 - Difficulty adhering to program requirements
 - Incarceration
 - Substance use
- Prior authorization associated with lower treatment duration

Evidence suggests buprenorphine retention improves survival

- Overdose and all-cause mortality lower during treatment than off treatment
- Longer retention associated with lower use rates and improved survival
- First 4 weeks off treatment riskier than remaining time (>4 weeks) off treatment

Can we honor patient preferences for buprenorphine discontinuation while maximizing positive outcomes?

- Respect autonomy while avoiding harm?
- Need evidence to inform conversations with patients about buprenorphine discontinuation, particularly those who have already decided to do so – When? How? With what support?
- Difficult to study in a randomized trial: is there equipoise?
- But numerous potential confounders in observational studies

Aim

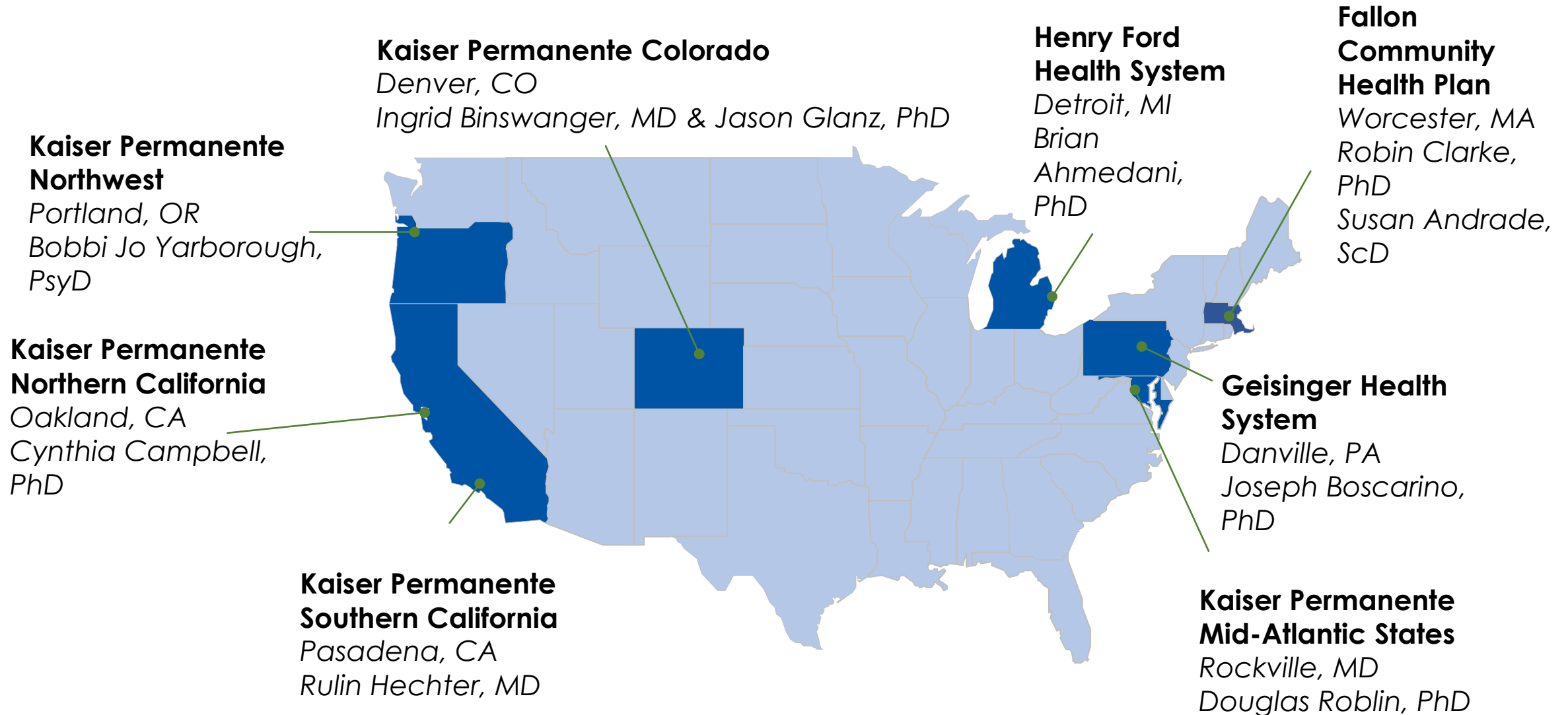
Examine the association between buprenorphine treatment length and mortality and overdose risk

(Is there an optimal period after which patients can safely discontinue buprenorphine treatment?)

Glanz JM, Binswanger IA, Clarke CL, et al., The association between buprenorphine treatment duration and mortality: a multi-site cohort study of people who discontinued treatment. Addiction. 2023 Jan;118(1):97-107

Opioid Registry

Eight Participating Health Systems



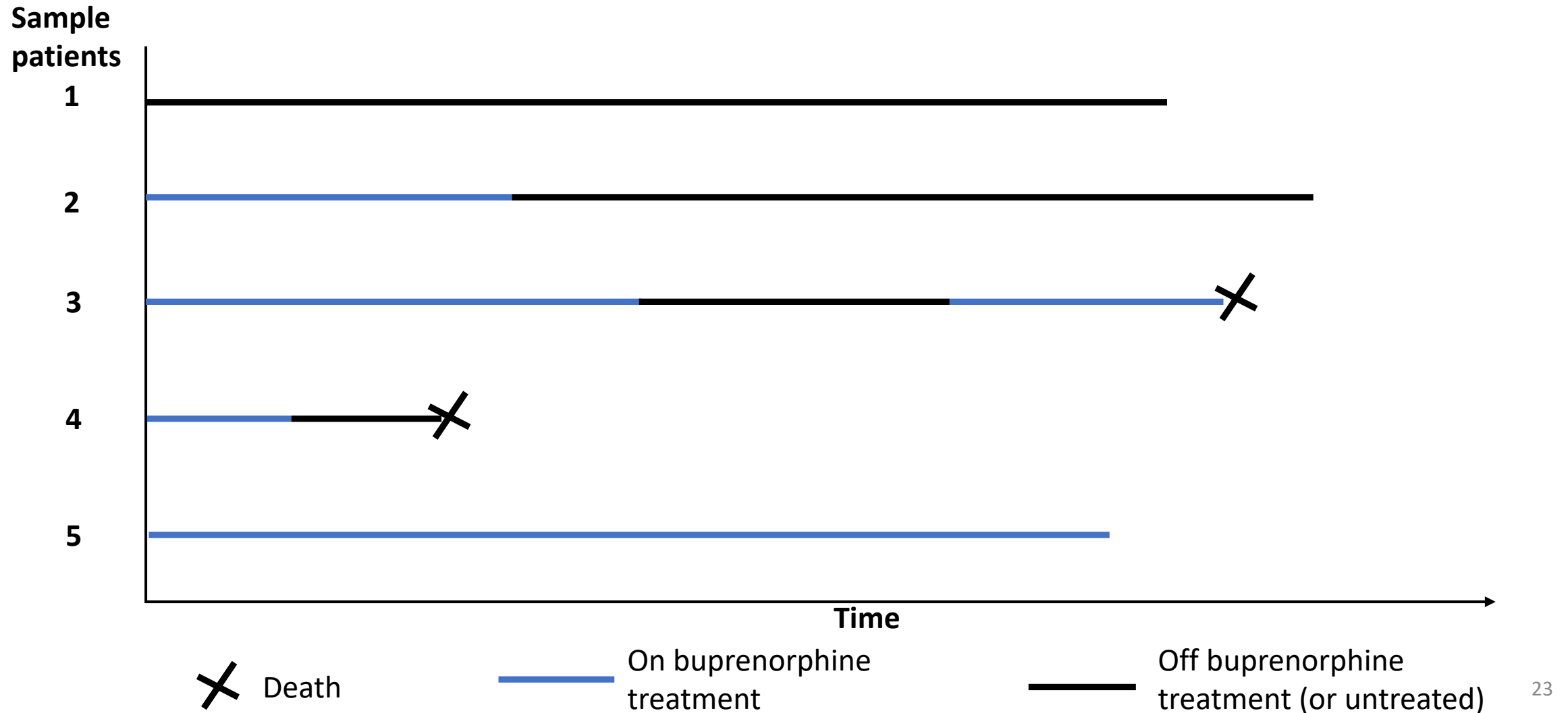
Settings

- Eight integrated health systems representing an insurance plan and care delivery system serving between 270,000-4.7 million people
- OUD care delivered through internal or contracted specialty treatment programs or primary care including:
 - Sublingual buprenorphine or buprenorphine/naloxone
 - XR naltrexone
 - Referral to methadone

Data in the Opioid Registry

- Based on any opioid dispensation or diagnosis of OUD for years 2012-2018
- Demographics
- Medications: Opioid prescriptions, medications for OUD, benzodiazepines
- Diagnoses: Pain, opioid use disorder, non-opioid substance use disorder, comorbid diagnoses
- Health services utilization
- Overdose and mortality

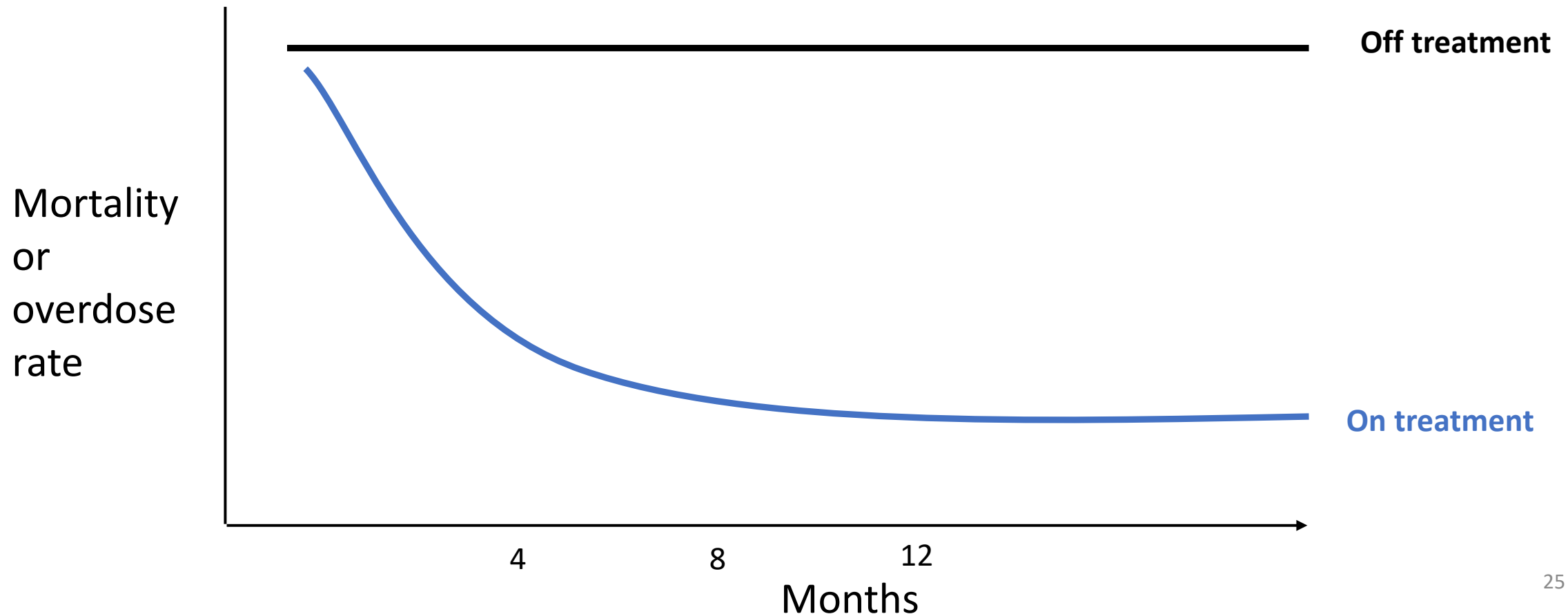
Classic cohort design to examine the association between buprenorphine retention and mortality



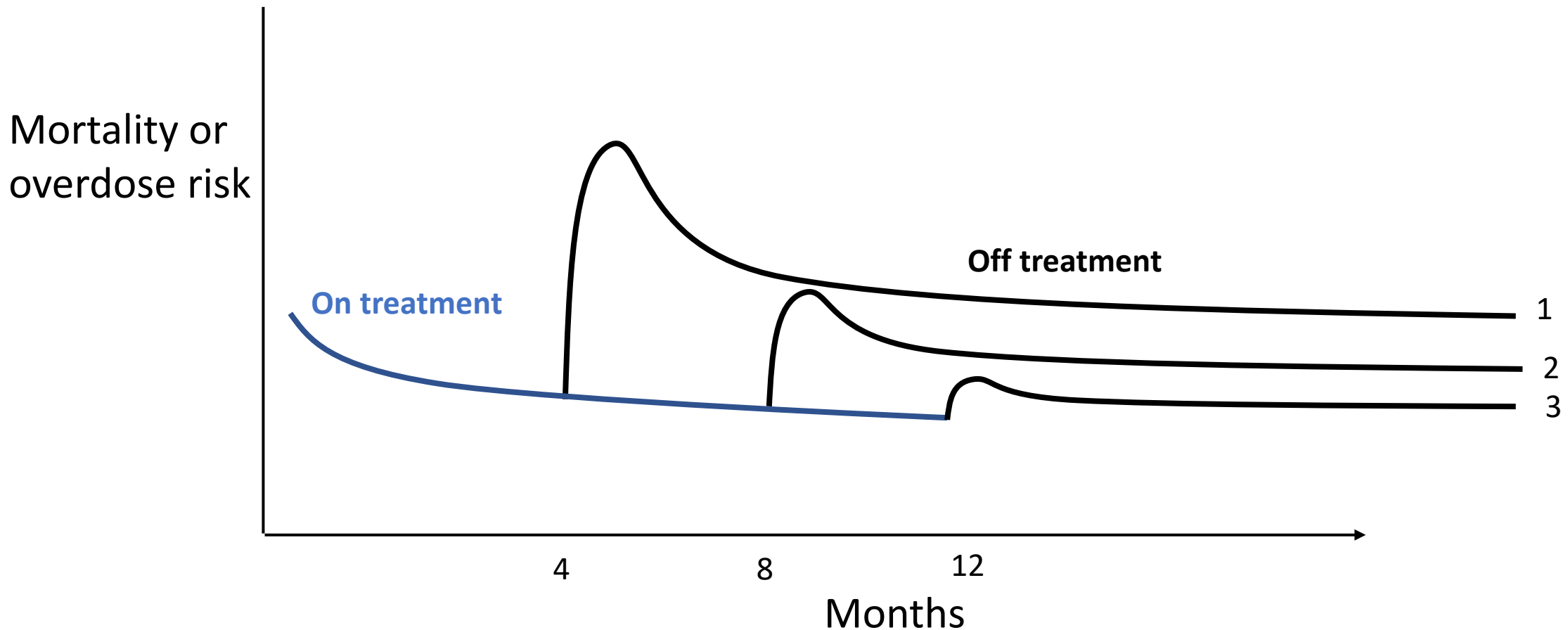
Two assessments of buprenorphine effectiveness

1. How long does one have to stay on buprenorphine treatment to see a mortality or overdose benefit relative to being off treatment (or alternative treatments)?
2. How long does one have to stay on treatment to see a reduction in mortality or overdose risk after discontinuing treatment?

1. How long does one have to stay on buprenorphine treatment to see a mortality or overdose benefit relative to being off treatment or alternative treatments?

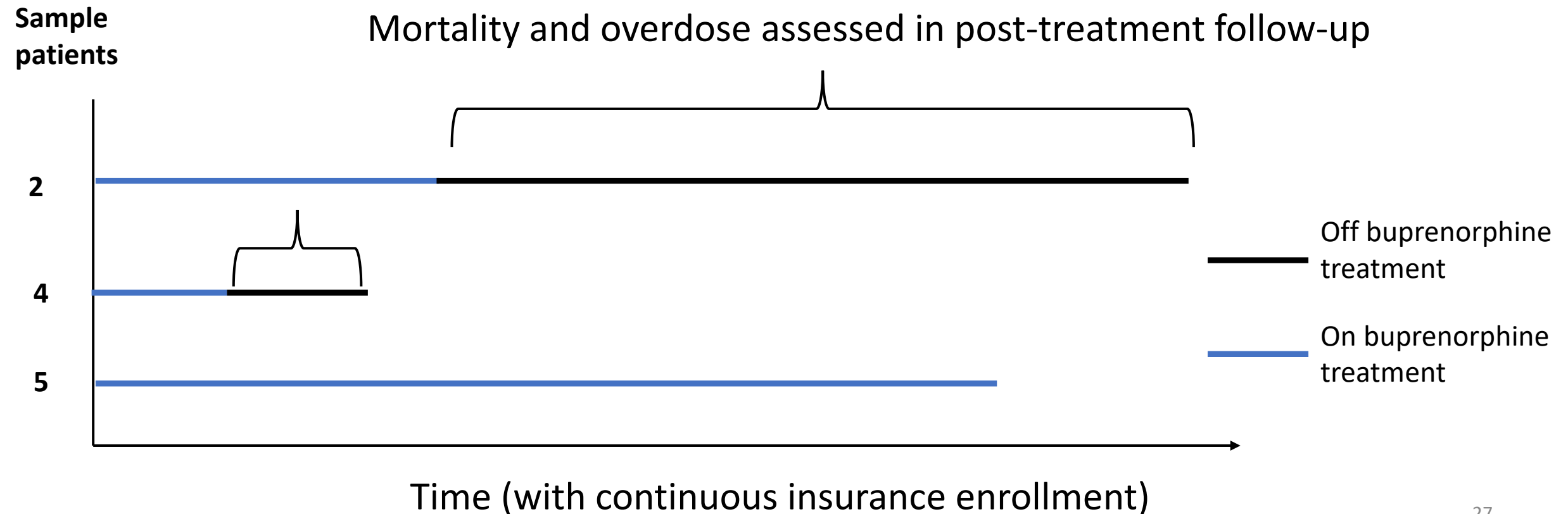


2. How long does one have to stay on treatment to see a reduction in mortality or overdose risk after discontinuing treatment?



For #2, need adequate post-treatment follow-up

- Outcomes assessed during insurance enrollment after treatment ends
- Length of post-treatment insurance enrollment affects statistical power



Cohort

1. In the opioid registry, identified adults (> 18 years) who
 - Started buprenorphine between 1/1/2012 and 12/31/2017
 - Stopped buprenorphine treatment prior to 12/31/2018
 - Had at least 1 day of post-treatment insurance enrollment
2. Excluded patients with <90 days pre-treatment enrollment, in hospice, with cancer, or without pharmacy insurance

Cohort

3. Assessed final treatment episode if there was more than one episode
 - New treatment episode occurred after a gap in treatment > 28 days
 - Excluded treatment episodes of <8 days (induction failure)
 - Most patients had one episode but wide range: median = 1 episode (IQR 1 to 2 episodes; range 1 to 17 episodes)
4. Sensitivity analysis for all treatment episodes

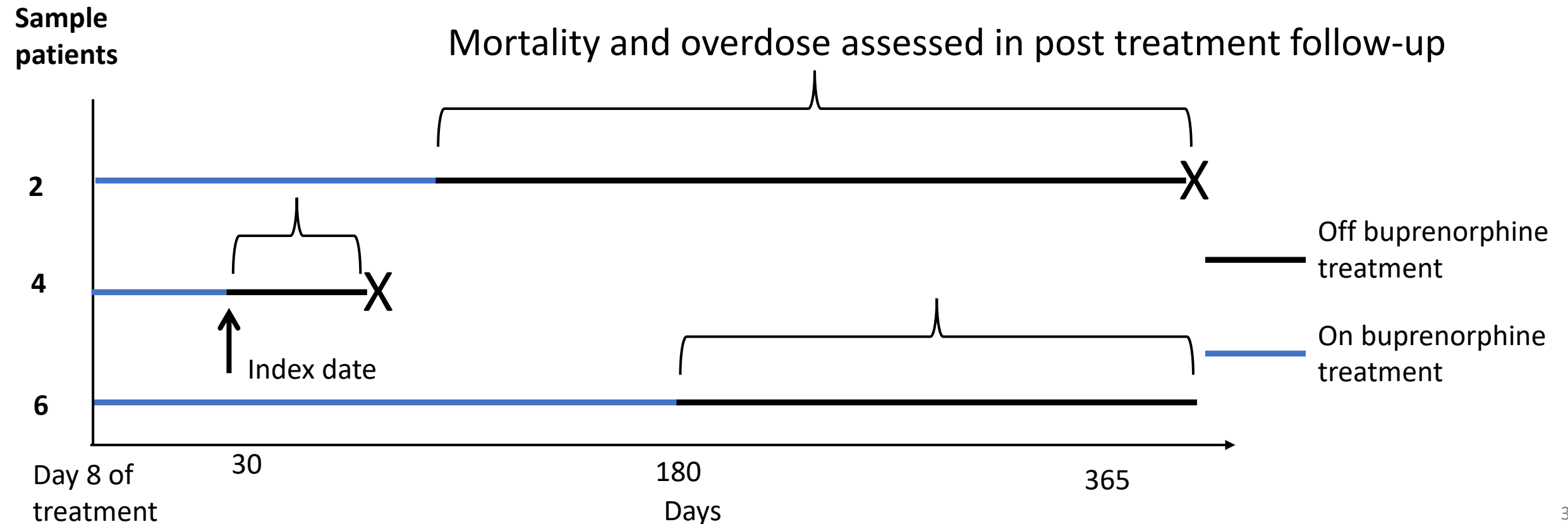
Cohort

5. Categorized final treatment episode into 5 groups (exposure)

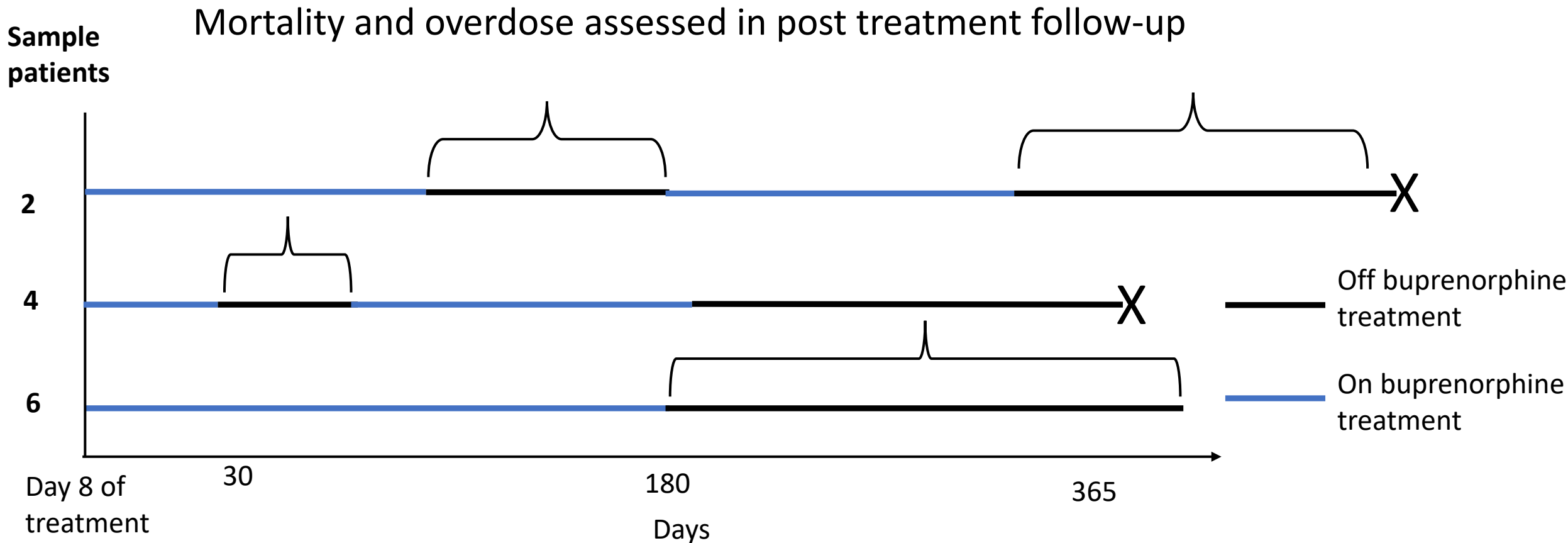
- 8-30 days (post-induction month 1)
- 31-90 days (months 2-3)
- 91-180 days (months 4-6)
- 181-365 days (months 7-12)
- >365 days (referent, greater than a year)

6. Censored at death, overdose, disenrollment, switching to another treatment, or end of study (12/31/2018)

Cohort study design with post-treatment all-cause mortality or overdose (time-to-event)



Cohort study design with multiple treatment episodes



Outcomes

1. All-cause mortality – 8 sites: deaths in electronic health records (emergency department or hospital or reported) for 4 sites, state vital records for 4 sites
2. Non-fatal and fatal drug overdose -- data from EHR and state vital records with cause-of-death available for 4 sites
3. Non-fatal and fatal opioid overdose from EHR and state vital records at 4 sites

Covariates considered (potential confounders)

- Age
- Race and ethnicity
- Year of final treatment episode
- Number of treatment episodes
- Other medication use in 6 months prior to starting the final episode of treatment (antidepressants, z-drugs, gabapentin, benzodiazepines)
- Prior drug overdose
- Indicators of injection drug use (HIV/AIDS, Hep C or related infections)
- Alcohol use disorder
- Other drug use disorders
- Mental health disorder diagnosis
- Charlson comorbidity Index
- Number emergency department visits
- Opioid dispensings in 30 days prior to final treatment episode
- OUD severity
- Maximum dispensed buprenorphine dose

Analysis

Aim: Examine the association between buprenorphine treatment length and mortality/overdose risk among people who have discontinued

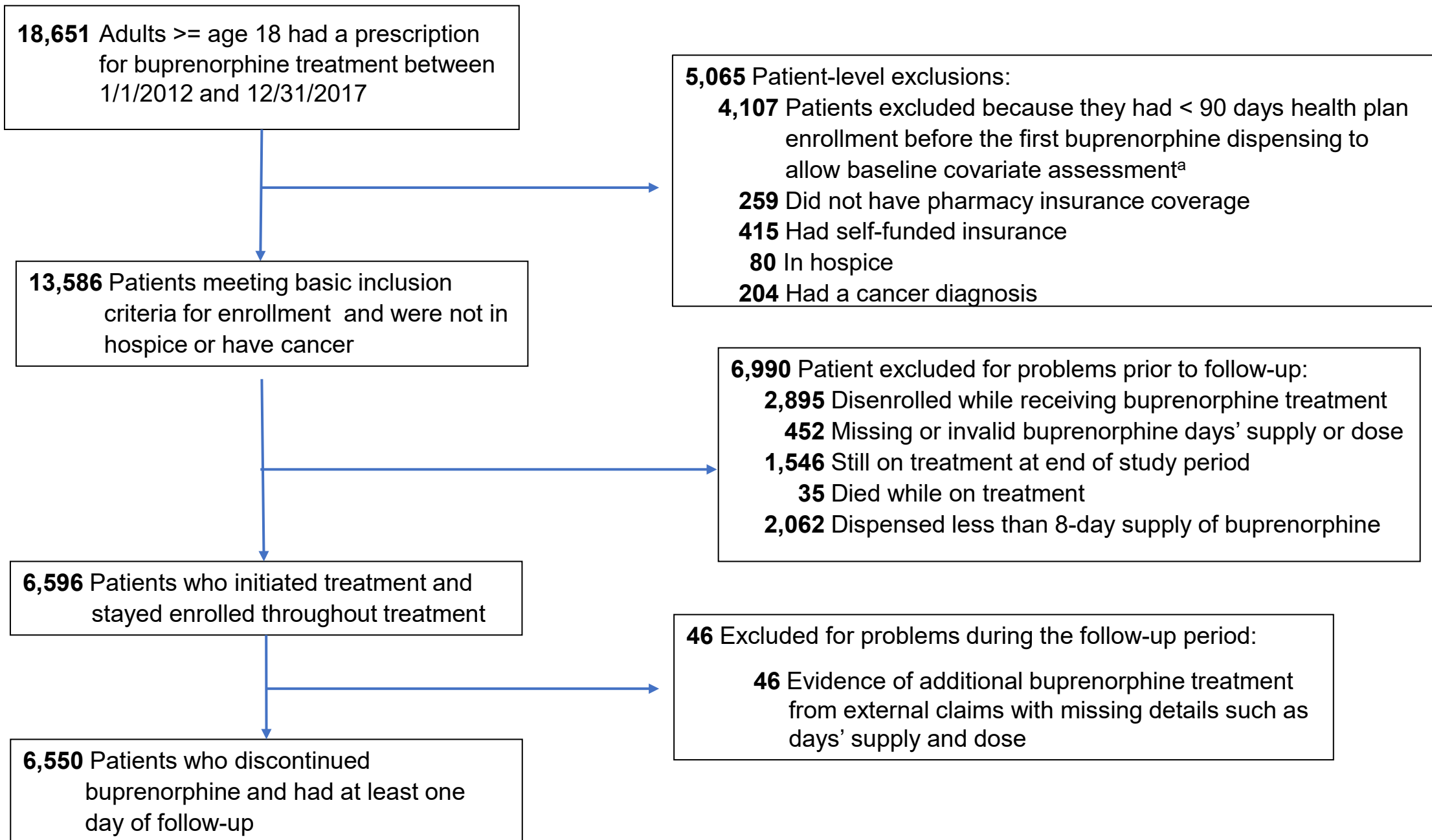
1. Propensity score analysis to control for confounding with inverse probability weighting
2. Frailty regression to analyze time-to-death or overdose post-treatment, adjusted for covariates via propensity score weighting
 - Three models – all-cause mortality and fatal/nonfatal overdose and opioid overdose as outcomes
 - Study site included in models as a random effect
 - Pairwise comparisons
3. Frailty regression with individual patients as a random effect to account for clustering of multiple treatment episodes

Propensity score analysis

1. Assess associations between baseline characteristics (covariates) and treatment and between covariates and outcome
 - Univariate multinomial logistic regression with treatment length as dependent variable and each baseline covariate as independent variable
 - Univariate Cox proportional hazards regression with death as outcome and each baseline covariate as independent variable
 - Identify baseline covariates associated with both treatment and outcome (confounders)
2. Build multivariable multinomial logistic regression model with treatment length as dependent variable and baseline confounders as independent variables

Propensity score analysis

3. Calculate propensity scores (PS) = patients' predicted probability of receiving treatment given their characteristics
4. Create weights = $1/PS$ for treated, $1/(1-PS)$ for untreated
5. Check balance of covariates
 - Population standardized mean differences
6. Estimate treatment effect using Cox proportional hazards regression, adjusted for covariates via propensity score weighting



Cohort characteristics (N=6550)

Characteristic	Mean (SD) or %
Age at start of treatment, y	37 (15)
Male gender	61%
Race and Ethnicity	
Non-Hispanic Black	5%
Hispanic	13%
Non-Hispanic White	73%
Non-Hispanic Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American, and other groups	3%
Unknown	6%

Cohort characteristics (N=6550)

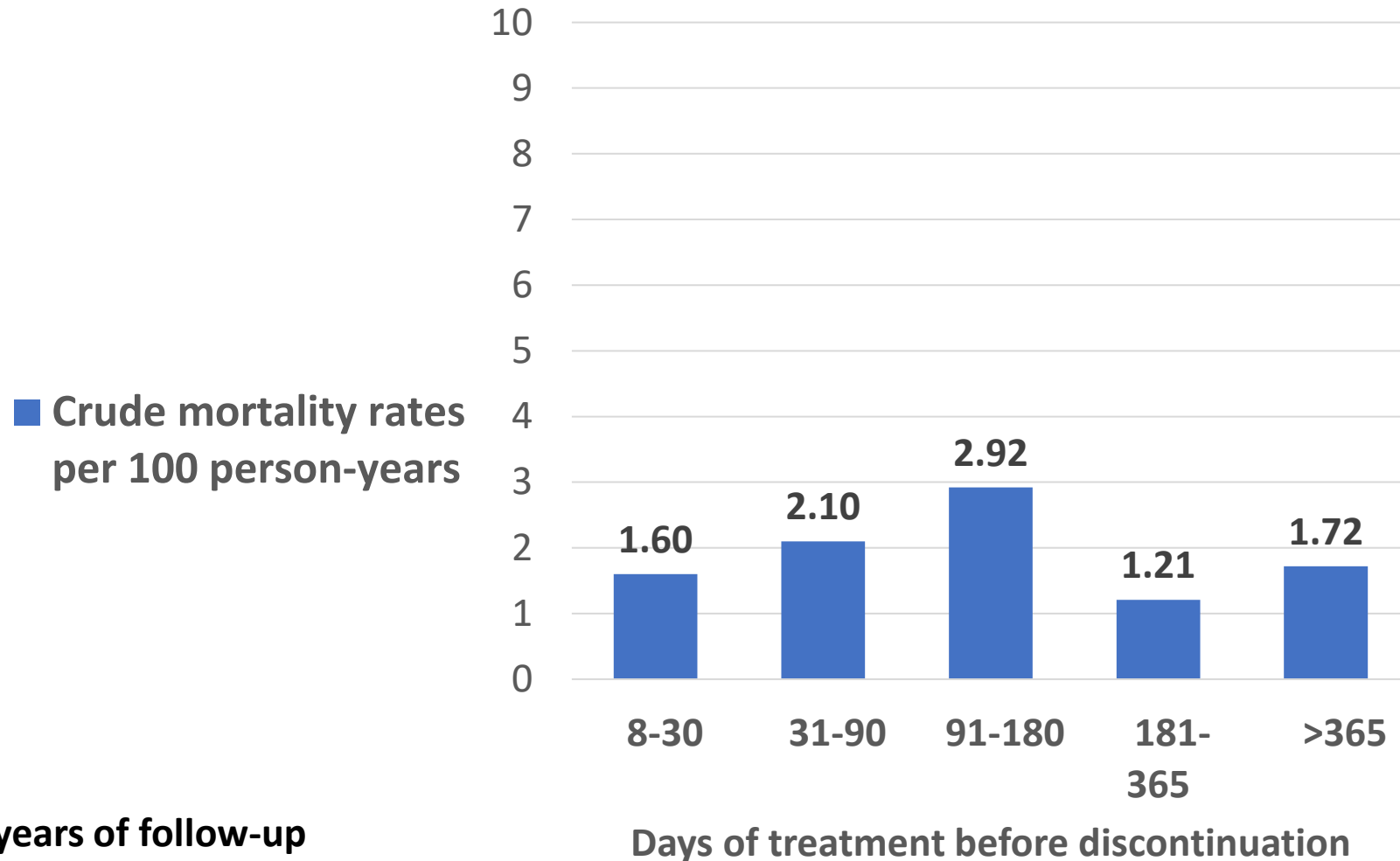
Characteristic	% or median (IQR)
Opioid dispensed in 30 days prior to treatment episode	29%
Alcohol use disorder	18%
Injection drug use related infection	5%
Mental health disorder	55%
Drug overdose	10%
Charlson co-morbidity	0 (0-1)
Emergency department utilization, 6 months	0 (0-1)

*Also examined year treatment episode started, past 6 month medications (Z-drugs, antidepressants, gabapentin, benzodiazepines), OUD severity coding

Cohort characteristics (N=6550)

Characteristic	Mean (SD) or median (IQR) or %
Mean time on treatment, days	181 (290)
Median time on treatment, days	60 (27-203)
Time on treatment in groups	
8-30 days	46%
31-90 days	22%
91-180 days	12%
181-365 days	10%
>365 days	11%
Number of treatment episodes	1 (1-2)
Follow-up post treatment cessation, days	392 (120-875)
Median maximum buprenorphine dose (mg/day)	12 (8-16)
Switch to naltrexone or methadone after episode	11%

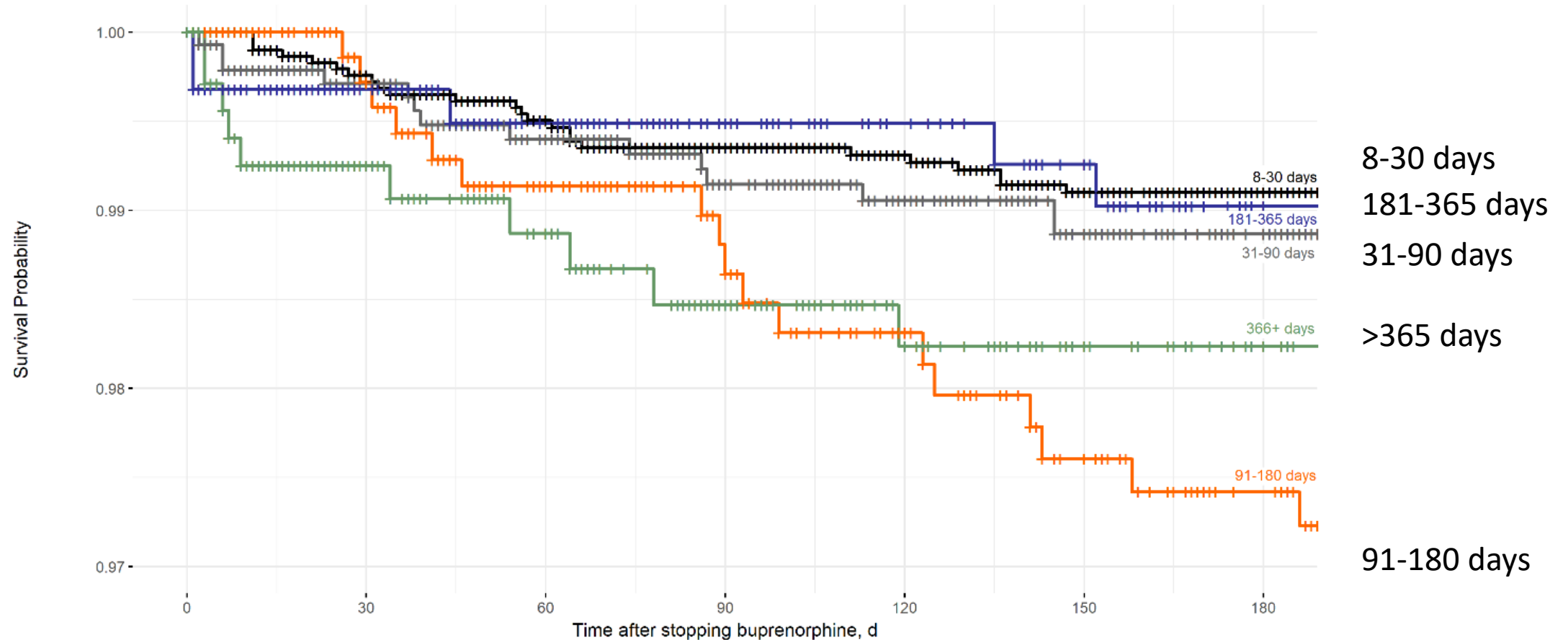
Crude mortality rates (CMR) after stopping treatment by length of time on treatment



N=191 deaths

10,471 person-years of follow-up

Survival curves for first 180 days of treatment



Number at risk								
Strata		0	30	60	90	120	150	180
8-30 days	3014	2805	2655	2514	2400	2284	2209	
31-90 days	1426	1310	1225	1146	1087	1039	995	
91-180 days	768	704	644	601	567	540	518	
181-365 days	622	544	504	461	440	425	397	
366+ days	720	552	506	464	429	402	382	

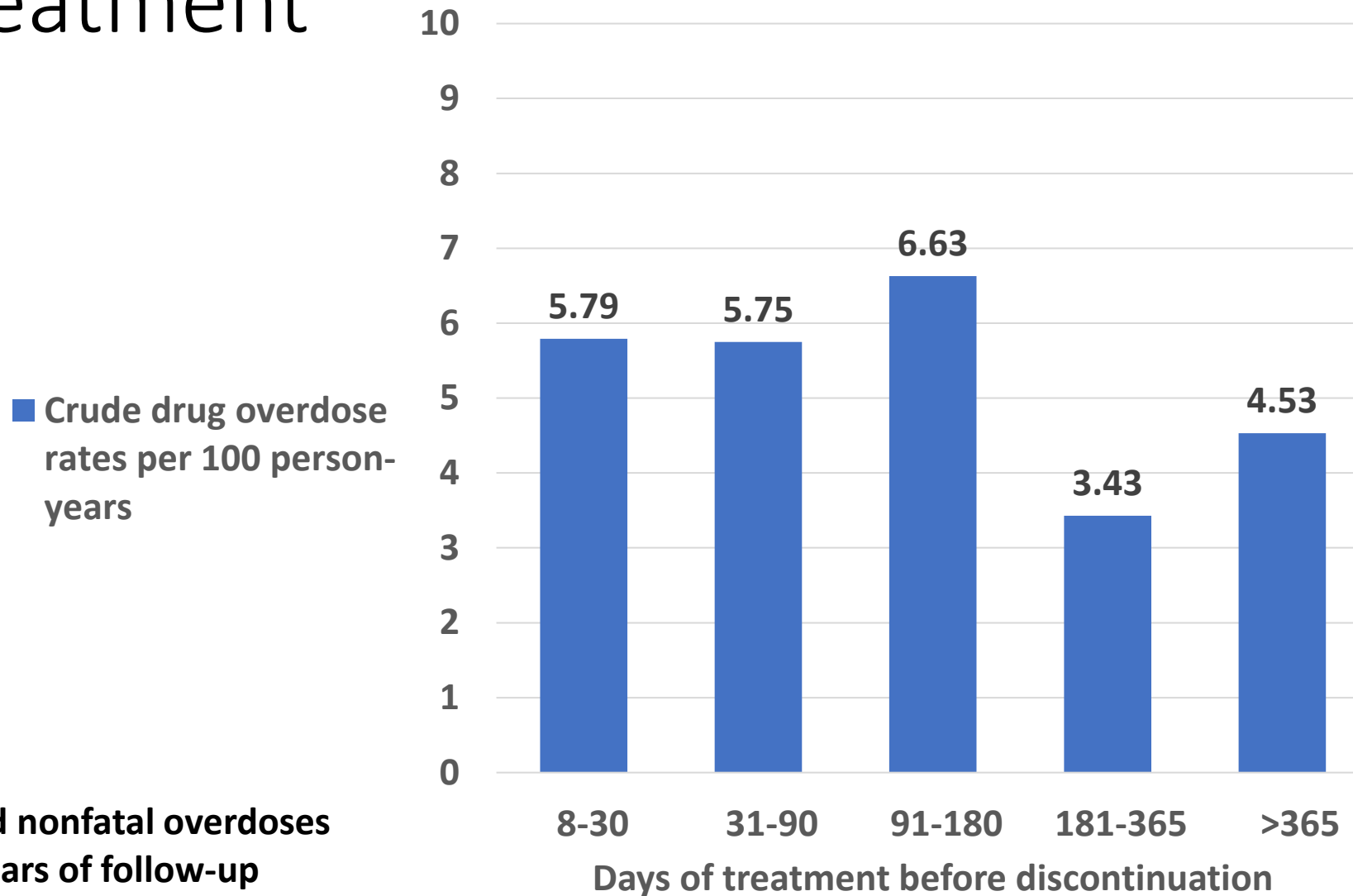
Adjusted and propensity-weighted model for the association between length of buprenorphine treatment and all-cause mortality

Length of buprenorphine treatment	Hazard Ratio (95% CI)
8-30 days	1.25 (0.68, 2.31)
31-90 days	1.59 (0.85, 2.98)
91-180 days	1.93 (1.00, 3.71)
181-365 days	0.79 (0.35, 1.82)
> 365 days	1.00

Model contrasts for all-cause mortality

Contrasts	Hazard ratio (95% CI)
8-30 vs. 31-90 days	0.79 (0.55, 1.13)
8-30 vs. 91-180 days	0.65 (0.42, 1.01)
8-30 vs. 181-365 days	1.57 (0.80, 3.08)
31-90 vs. 91-180 days	0.83 (0.52, 3.98)
31-90 vs. 181-365 days	2.00 (1.01, 3.98)
91-180 vs. 181-365 days	2.42 (1.19, 4.95)

Crude drug overdose rates by length of time on treatment



N=160 fatal and nonfatal overdoses
5892 person-years of follow-up

Adjusted and propensity-weighted model for the association between length of buprenorphine treatment and drug overdose

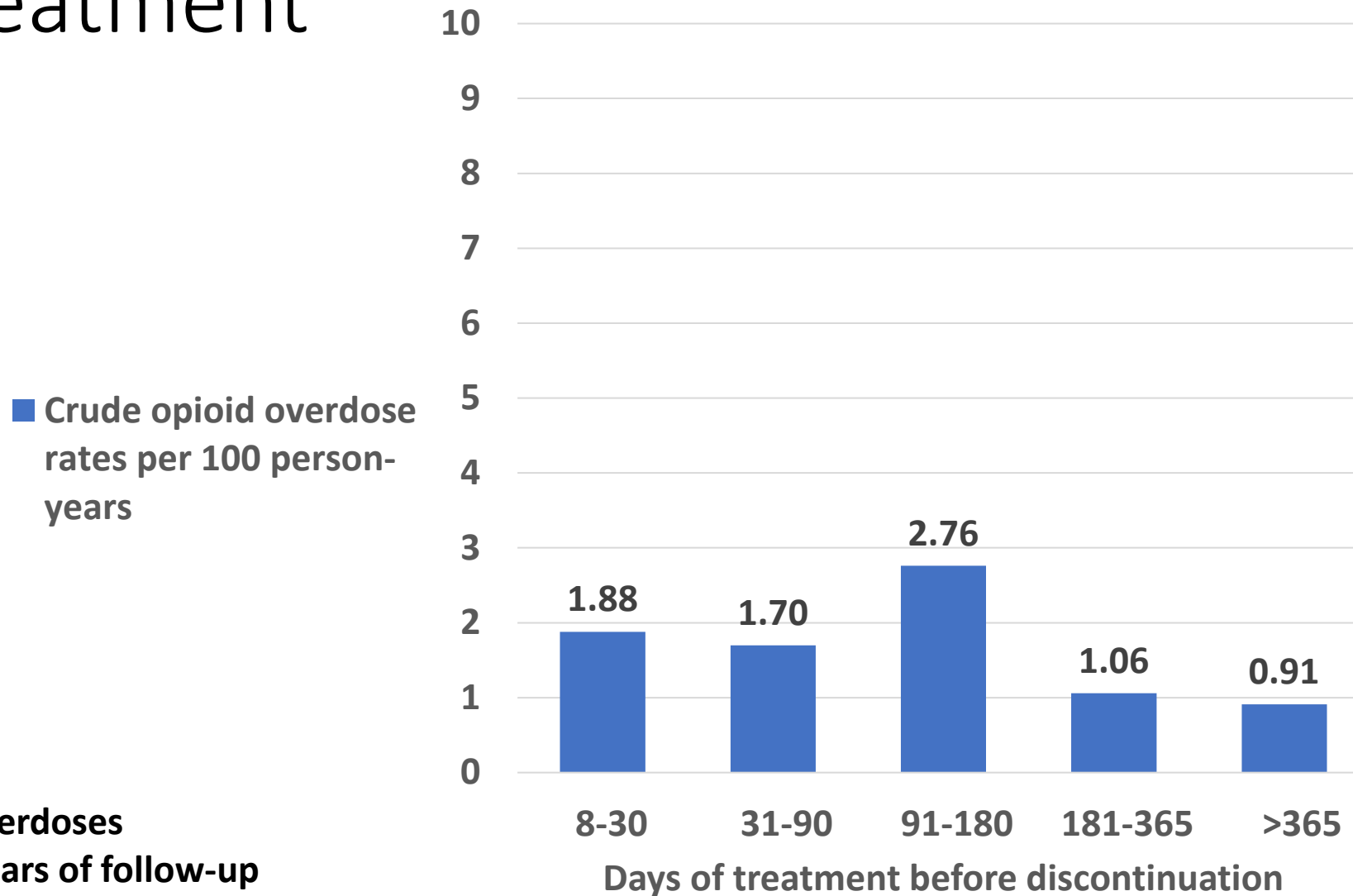
Length of buprenorphine treatment	Hazard Ratio (95% CI)
8-30 days	1.39 (0.89, 2.16)
31-90 days	1.30 (0.82, 2.07)
91-180 days	1.48 (0.91, 2.42)
181-365 days	0.74 (0.41, 1.36)
> 365 days	1.00

*Overdose fatalities available from 4 of 8 sites

Model contrasts for fatal and nonfatal drug overdose

Contrasts	Hazard ratio (95% CI)
8-30 vs. 31-90 days	1.07 (0.80, 1.41)
8-30 vs. 91-180 days	0.93 (0.67, 1.31)
8-30 vs. 181-365 days	1.86 (1.14, 3.04)
31-90 vs. 91-180 days	0.88 (0.61, 1.27)
31-90 vs. 181-365 days	1.75 (1.05, 2.91)
91-180 vs. 181-365 days	1.99 (1.17, 3.40)

Crude opioid overdose rates by length of time on treatment



N=54 opioid overdoses
6112 person-years of follow-up

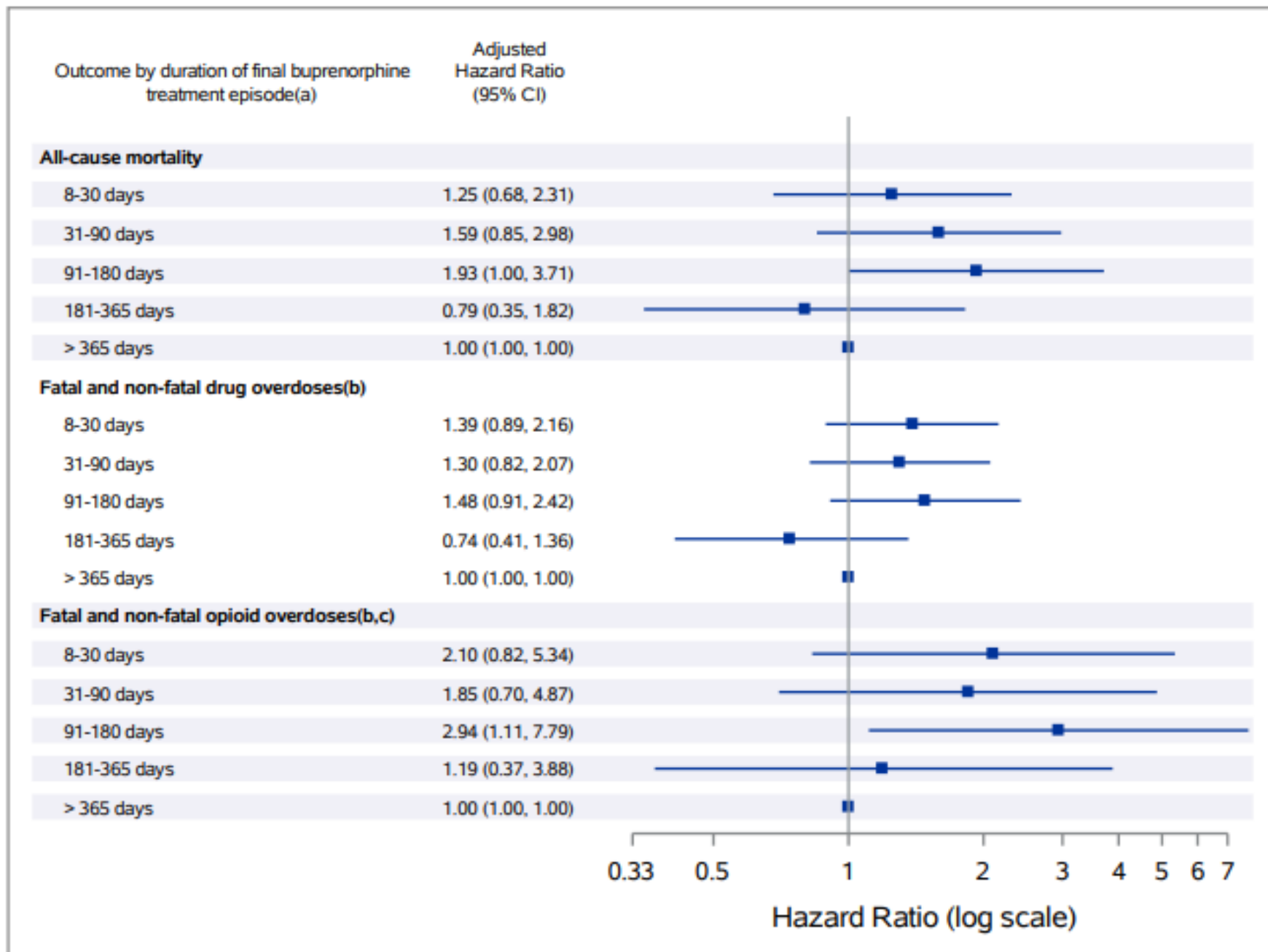
Adjusted and propensity-weighted model for the association between length of buprenorphine treatment and opioid overdose

Length of buprenorphine treatment	Hazard Ratio (95% CI)
8-30 days	2.10 (0.82, 2.16)
31-90 days	1.85 (0.70, 2.07)
91-180 days	2.94 (1.11, 7.79)
181-365 days	1.19 (0.37, 3.88)
> 365 days	1.00

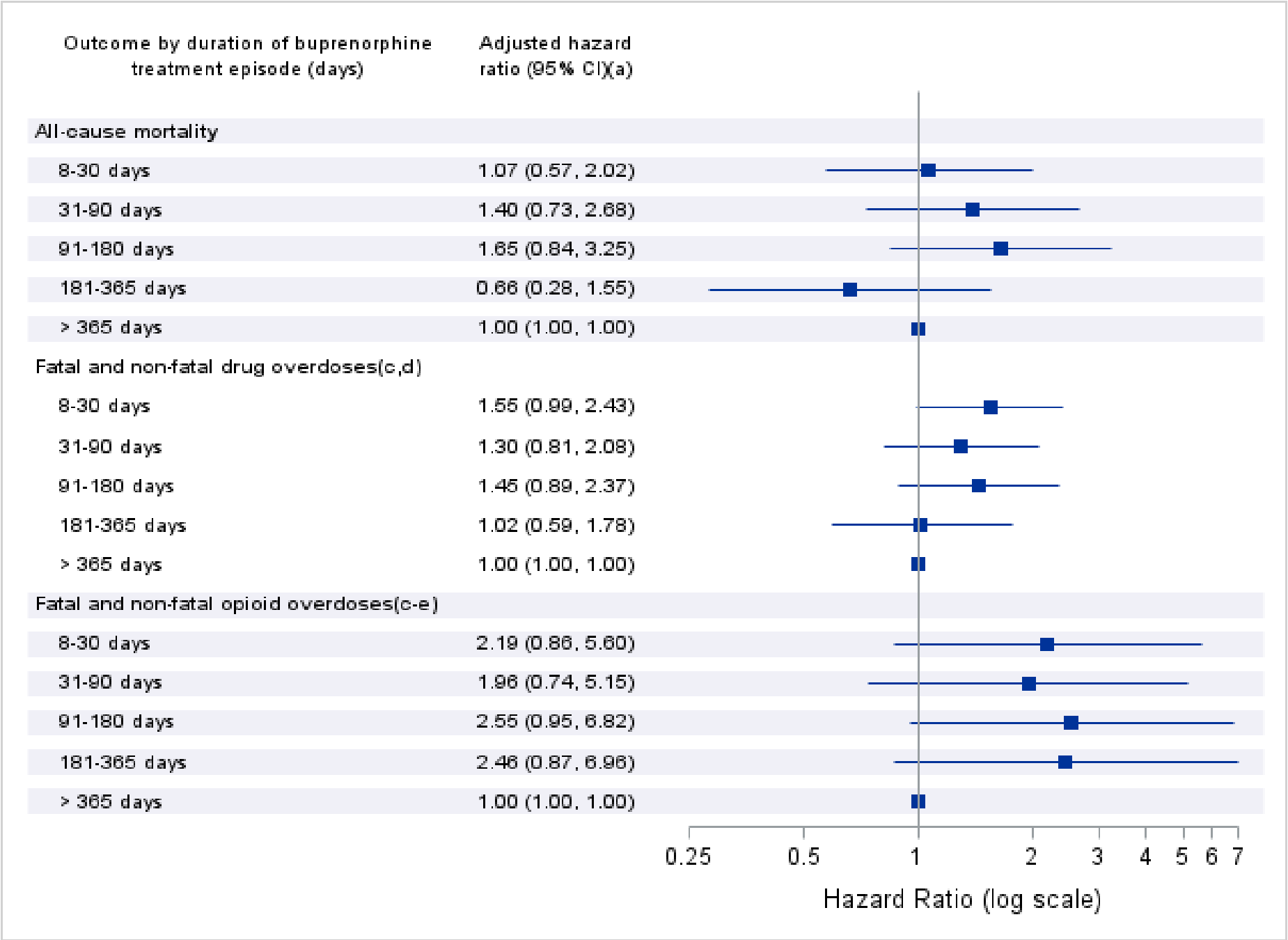
*Overdose fatalities available from 4 of 8 sites

Model contrasts for fatal and nonfatal opioid overdose

Contrasts	Hazard ratio (95% CI)
8-30 vs. 31-90 days	1.14 (0.69, 1.87)
8-30 vs. 91-180 days	0.71 (0.42, 1.21)
8-30 vs. 181-365 days	1.76 (0.75, 4.16)
31-90 vs. 91-180 days	0.63 (0.35, 1.14)
31-90 vs. 181-365 days	1.55 (0.63, 3.82)
91-180 vs. 181-365 days	2.47 (0.99, 6.14)



All treatment episodes



Limitations

- Death data limited in some systems
 - In-hospital deaths
 - Lacking cause-of-death
 - In state only
- All-cause mortality lacks specificity and may not be the ideal outcome
- Pre-fentanyl in some regions – if it impacts retention and mortality
- Do not know what patient factors or provider/program factors led to discontinuation
- Practice patterns may have changed since study period, fewer barriers
- Selection bias
- Uncertain how patients were tapered or stopped

Summary

1. Of individuals who stopped buprenorphine treatment, a majority stopped before 90 days of treatment
2. Greatest risk for all-cause mortality was among those that stopped treatment between 91 and 180 days
3. Greatest risk for fatal and nonfatal overdose was also among those that stopped treatment between 91 and 180 days
4. Staying on treatment longer than 365 days was associated with the lowest risk for overdose compared to shorter treatment lengths (not statistically significant)

Clinical implications: first consider strategies to maximize retention

- Greater medication dose and supply at initiation
- Lower threshold services: reduced monitoring and easier access via telehealth
- Manage of co-occurring use disorders and depression
- Longer-acting buprenorphine formulations
- Manage risk of insurance discontinuity and clinician/program change
- Consider support of clinical pharmacists/team-based care
- Digital supports
- *Follow CTN-100: Optimizing Retention, Duration, and Discontinuation Strategies for Opioid Use Disorder Pharmacotherapy trial*

Assess patient needs and intentions at the start of treatment and periodically

- Is there anything we can do to improve your experience with the medication?
- Do you have any goals about how long you would like to be taking medications?
- If so,
 - Why?
 - When?
 - How long do you anticipate it might take?
 - Can we discuss alternatives?

Current ASAM and SAMHSA Guidelines

No limit on the time people with an opioid use disorder remain on treatment

- Make patients aware of the risks
- Discuss treatment alternatives
- Discuss naloxone to prevent fatal overdose
- Taper slowly
- Monitor closely
- Remain in treatment past discontinuation

IF patient plans to taper or stop: provide education, counseling, and support

- No clear optimal period after which you can safely discontinue buprenorphine treatment
- Risk of overdose could be fatal, esp. given changes in drug supply

BUT

- If you have decided to taper, let's work together on a plan to align with your treatment goals
- Realistic timeline and expectations
- Schedule appointments for during after discontinuation

IF patient plans to taper or stop: consider clinical strategies to support tapering

- Prescribe or provide naloxone
- Avoid dose variability and abrupt discontinuation
- ***Consider***
 - Smaller increments of dose reduction as absolute dose decreases
 - Change in formulation (ER buprenorphine, film for low doses)
 - Longer taper
 - Withdrawal management
 - Low threshold to increase/re-start

Thank you and questions/comments

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