



# Evaluation of patient experiences with prolonged-release buprenorphine

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## INTRODUCTION

Buvidal is a prolonged-release subcutaneous injectable preparation of buprenorphine available in weekly or monthly doses. It is the only licensed injectable form of opiate replacement therapy (ORT) available in the National Health Service (NHS). In 2019 it was made available in NHS Scotland<sup>1</sup>.

Prolonged release buprenorphine (PRB) preparations have been shown to be tolerable<sup>3</sup>, effective<sup>4</sup>, convenient, to decrease opiate cravings and improve outlook on life<sup>2</sup>.

National guidelines emphasise the importance of maximizing patient wellbeing when in treatment for opiate dependence<sup>5</sup>.

## OBJECTIVES

### Aim:

1. To assess the experience of patients on PRB by comparing results from validated audit tools over time, and complimenting this with qualitative data from patient interviews.

### Hypotheses:

1. Positive patient experience of PRB with results demonstrating acceptability, tolerability and effectiveness.
2. Improvement in self rated measures of psychological health, physical health, quality of life and opiate cravings indicating an overall improvement in wellbeing.

## METHODS

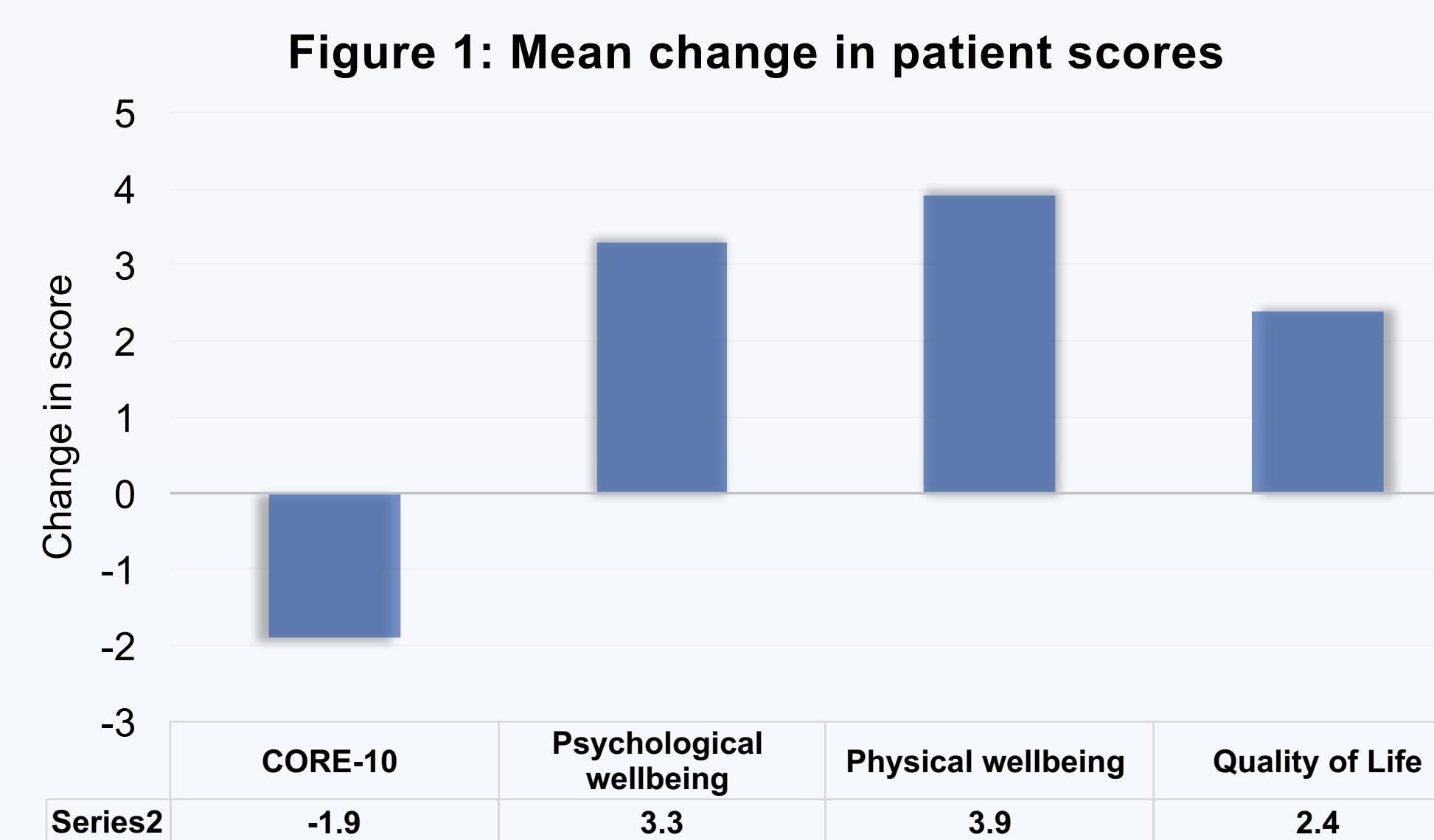
**Study design** Of the 28 patients on PRB in the North West Edinburgh Substance Misuse Service, those on treatment for three months or more were included in the quantitative analysis (n=16). Questionnaires were conducted on patients who responded to an invitation to take part (n=15).

Quantitative data included Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation 10 (CORE-10), Treatment Outcome Preference (TOP), and Craving Visual Analog Scale (VAS) scores.

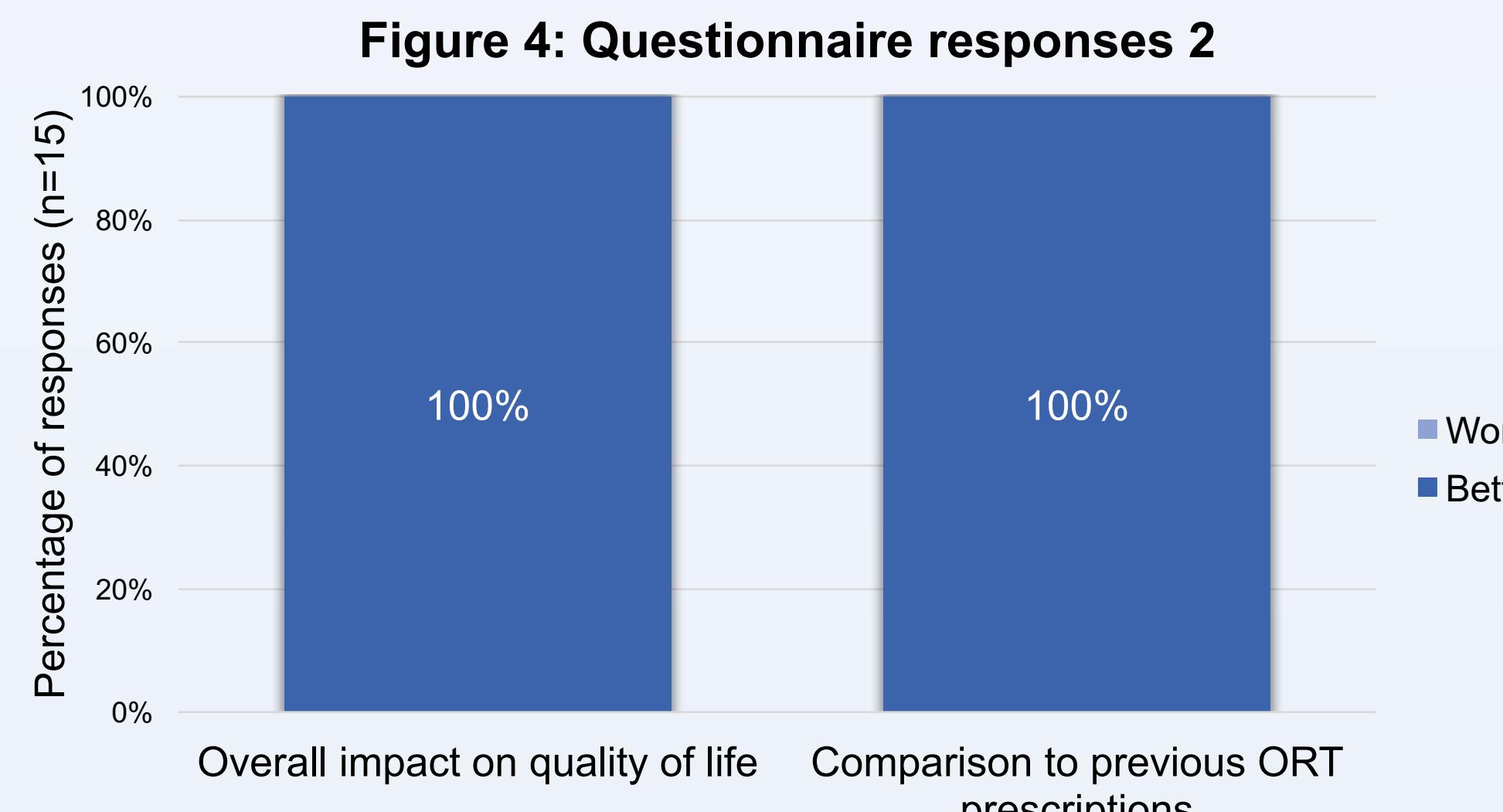
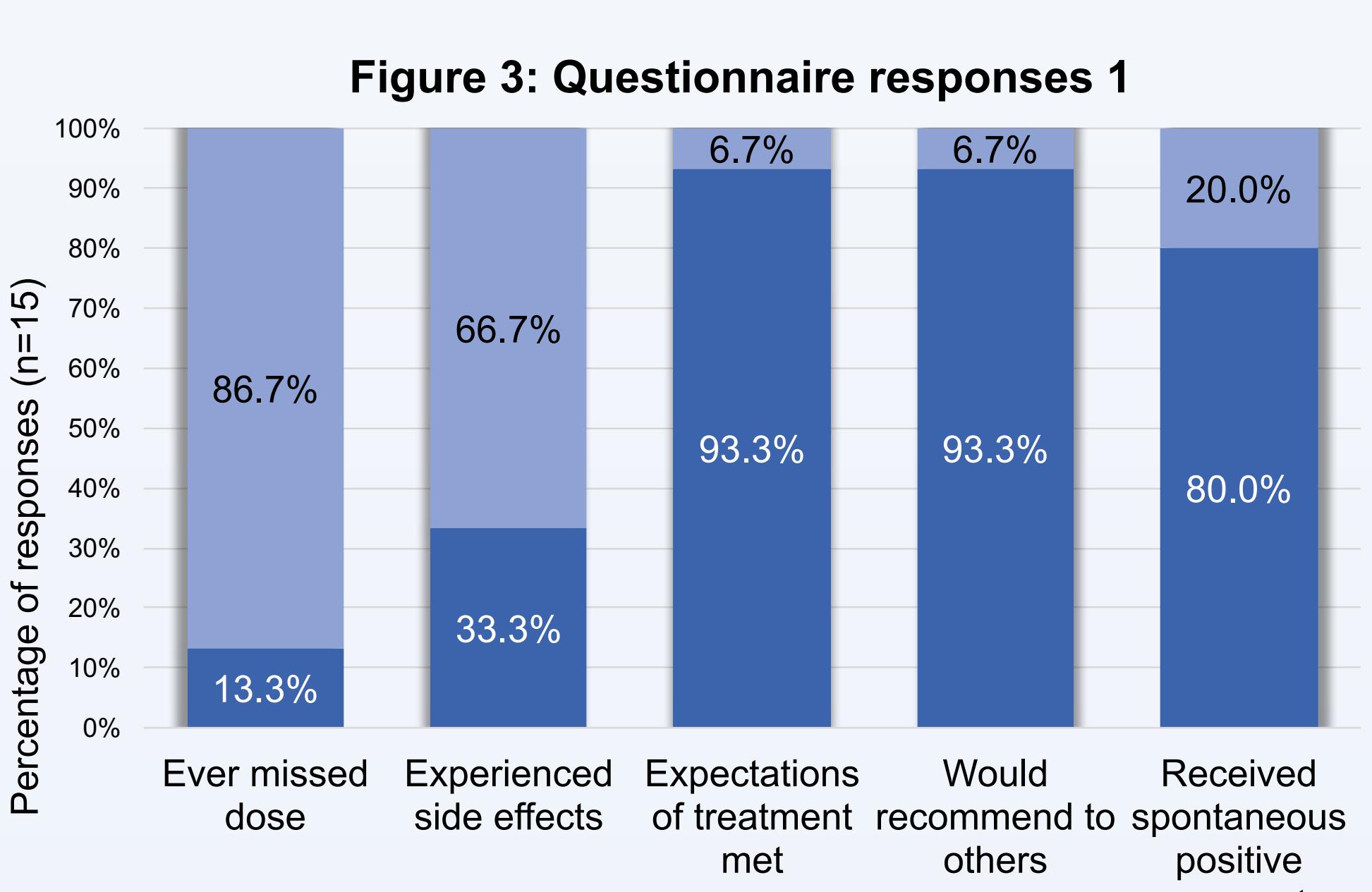
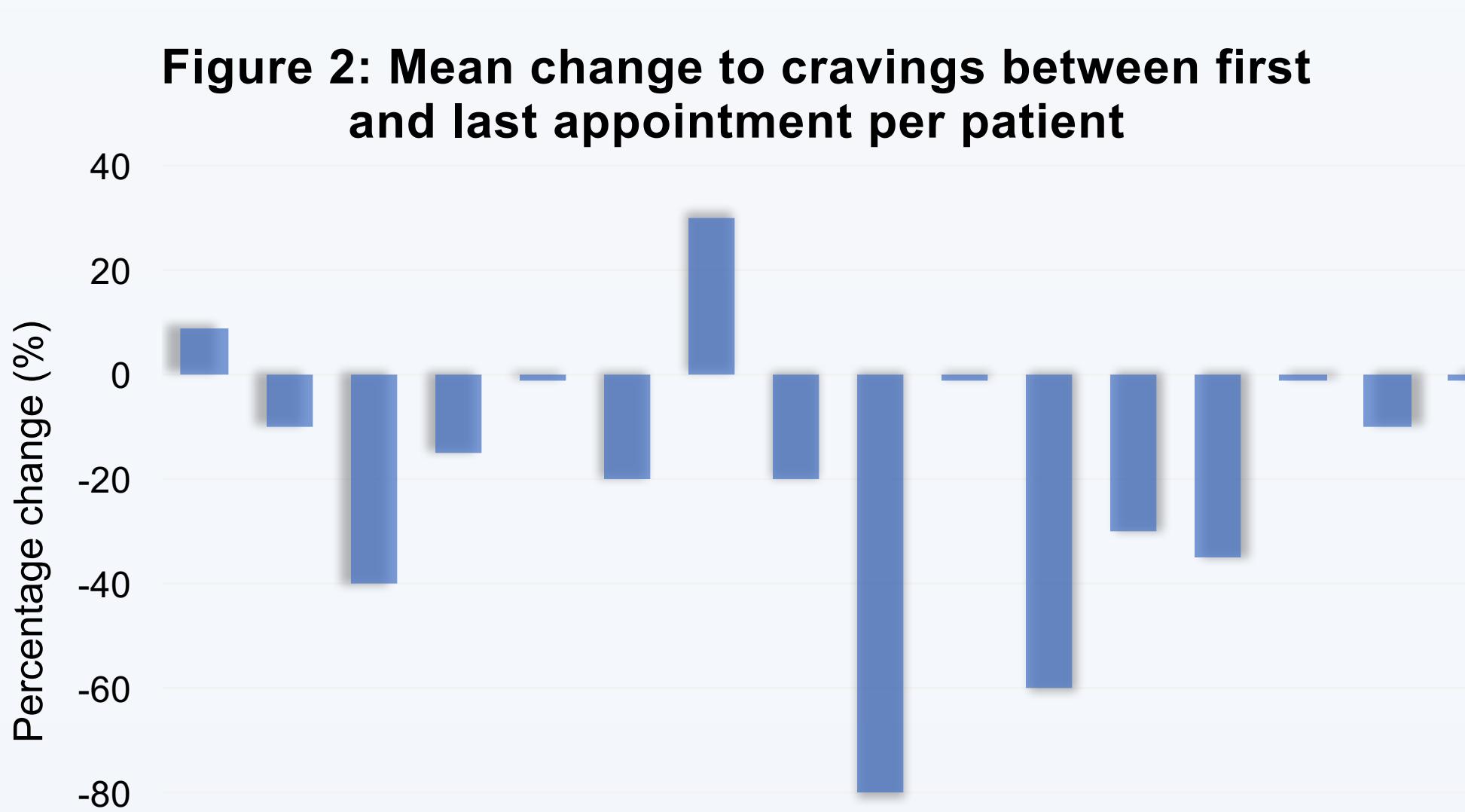
Interviews enquired about quality of life, comparison with other ORT, likelihood to recommend to others, spontaneous positive comments and change in smoking habits.

## RESULTS

**Mean health and quality of life scores increased. Mean CORE-10 scores decreased.**



**Mean craving VAS score generally decreased.**



## DISCUSSION

This study adds to the literature on patient experience of prolonged release buprenorphine. It presents a positive view of this preparation of ORT demonstrated through improvements in validated audit tools looking at self rated physical and psychological health, quality of life, cravings and other outcomes **indicating acceptability, tolerability and effectiveness** in accordance with the existing literature. This study also reported two unique outcome – an increase in spontaneous positive comments from family and friends, and a reduction in cigarette smoking habits.

There were improvements in self-rated physical, psychological, quality of life and CORE-10 scores, indicating a holistic improvement in mental, physical and interpersonal wellbeing.

**All interviewed patients reported that Buvidal is preferable to other forms of ORT that it had a positive impact on their quality of life.**

**A third experienced side effects. Over 90% felt their expectations of treatment were met and would recommend Buvidal to others.** These findings are strong indicators of acceptability and tolerability.

In accordance with existing literature on PRBs, this study found a **reduction in reports of opiate cravings**<sup>2</sup> indicating effectiveness.

**Four-fifths of interviewed patients reported spontaneous positive comments (80.0%).** These contributed to overall feelings of acceptance and decreased experience of stigma. This is a unique outcome measure that is underreported in the literature thus far.

**40% reported reductions in cigarette smoking habits.** This finding has not been reported in literature to date and warrants further study.

Table 1 illustrates anecdotal feedback to Buvidal in the patient voice.

Table 1:

### Patient voice on SC buprenorphine:

- "It is the best thing out there at the moment for opiate misuse...it is a huge, positive difference"
- "I'd take a yearly one if I could"
- "You are not tied down [to a pharmacy], you can get up and go"
- "It changed my life, which was so erratic...my relationship is as it was when I was completely clean"
- "A million times better [than previous prescriptions]...the cure for cancer for addicts... Whoever created it should win a Nobel Prize"
- "You wouldn't feel like you are on anything"
- "I know people who waste all their money on drugs and I'm not here to keep anyone's habit [now]...it is the best thing I have ever done"
- "It is better than anything else...other people don't need to know you are an addict...there is no judgement"
- "It's like I have never been to hospital. Like a lightbulb coming on."

## CONCLUSIONS

**Buvidal is an effective, acceptable and tolerable treatment for opiate dependence.**

Positive reports of the patient experience are consistent with the existing literature. Measures of holistic wellbeing show improvement.

Further research is required to investigate long-term impacts of prolonged release buprenorphine including the impact on cigarette smoking habits.

## REFERENCES

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