

newsworks<sup>BETA</sup>  
WHYY/NPR RADIO PHILADELPHIA

February 24, 2011

Powered by WHYY and You

**Treatment providers tout new drug  
to fight opioid addiction**

*Maiken Scott reporting*

Some drug treatment providers and public officials are excited about a new medical intervention for opioid addictions, calling it a "game changer." But others say "not so fast."

Vivitrol is already used to treat alcohol dependence, and is now FDA approved to manage addictions to opioids such as painkillers or heroin. The medication is injected once a month, and cuts down cravings. At a press conference Thursday, Robin Rothermel, who directs Pennsylvania's Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Programs, said this medication will revolutionize the treatment of opioid addicts.

"This gives us an opportunity to treat them in a way that we've never been able to treat them before," said Rothermel. "I really believe that this is going to significantly change the landscape of services in Pennsylvania."

Former White House Drug Czar General Barry McCaffrey is now with CRC health group, the country's largest treatment provider, which will start using Vivitrol for opioid addictions. He says the drug's main advantage is that it must be administered only once a month; other medications like Methadone have to be taken daily.

"You didn't have to make 30 decisions in the following month, you made one decision," said McCaffrey. "So I think the ramifications of this, recidivism for incarceration, relapse are going to be enormous."

Dr. William Lorman, Clinical Director of The Livengrin Foundation for Addiction Recovery doesn't quite share their excitement.

"I'm not jumping up and down just yet," said Lorman. "I see it just as something else that will be helpful for us to use in the process. My concern is that down the line, it's going to be a substitute for therapy."

He added that medications like Vivitrol only work for some addicts, and need to be used in conjunction with other services like therapy.

Original:

<http://www.newsworks.org/index.php/flexicontent/item/13844-treatment-providers-tout-new-drug-to-fight-opioid-addiction/>