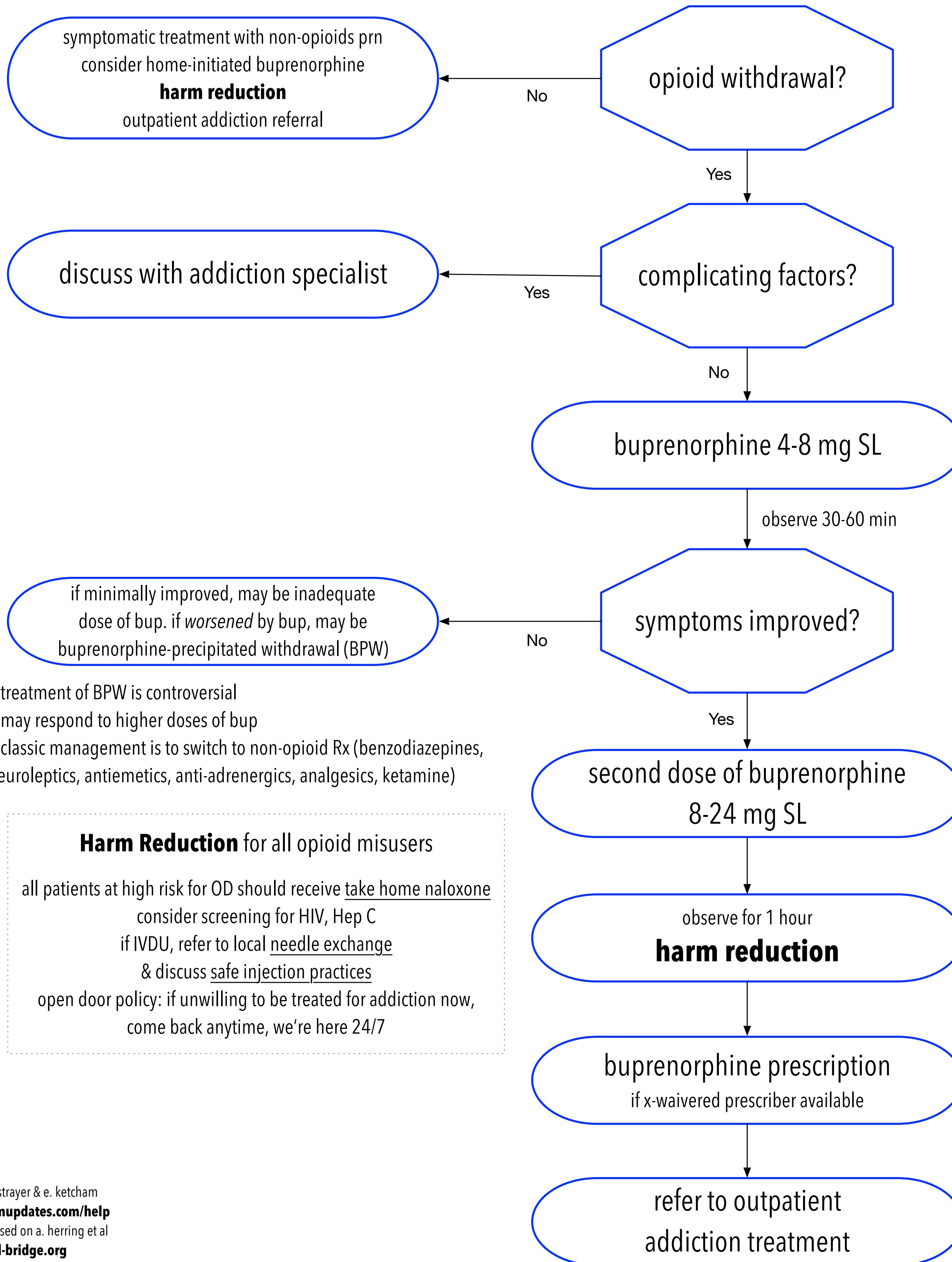


# Emergency Department Initiation of Buprenorphine for Opioid Use Disorder



*if inadequate withdrawal, buprenorphine will precipitate withdrawal*  
score on clinical opiate withdrawal scale COWS should be  $\geq 8$ , the higher the better

severe medical disease or very intoxicated/altered (e.g. acutely ill, liver failure)  
using methadone or extended-release opioid  
naloxone-precipitated withdrawal  
taking high dose prescription opioids daily

- the higher the daily dose of opioids the patient usually uses, and the more severe the withdrawal, the higher the initial dose of bup
- if borderline/inconsistent withdrawal symptoms, dose 2-4 mg every 1-2h
- if vomiting, may use 0.3 mg IV/IM every 30-60 min

- if symptoms not improved with 8 mg bup, patient may be in buprenorphine-precipitated withdrawal and effect of higher buprenorphine dose is uncertain
- bup can cause nausea - if primary symptom is nausea, treat with ondansetron 8 mg

- the bigger the initiation dose of buprenorphine, the longer the patient is protected from withdrawal, cravings, and street opioid overdose
- high dose (total dose of 16-32 mg in ED) preferred if patient not able to be seen by bup prescriber or fill prescription in next 12-24 hours
- do not initiate high dose if patient is heavy user of alcohol or benzodiazepines, medically complex, older age - for risk of respiratory depression

buprenorphine/naloxone 8/2 mg  
1 tab/strip BID SL  
dispense x 1 week

**72 hour rule:** patient may return to ED for up to 3 days  
administer 16 mg SL on days 2 & 3

- treatment of BPW is controversial
- may respond to higher doses of bup
- classic management is to switch to non-opioid Rx (benzodiazepines, neuroleptics, antiemetics, anti-adrenergics, analgesics, ketamine)

## Harm Reduction for all opioid misusers

all patients at high risk for OD should receive take home naloxone  
consider screening for HIV, Hep C  
if IVDU, refer to local needle exchange  
& discuss safe injection practices  
open door policy: if unwilling to be treated for addiction now,  
come back anytime, we're here 24/7