

2009 Fact Sheet:

A new narcotic review program

RENEWED FOCUS ON CLIENTS GETTING HIGH-DOSE OPIOIDS

Beginning September 1, 2009, many Medicaid clients who are receiving high doses of opioid narcotics will be reviewed by the Health and Recovery Services Administration (HRSA) to verify the medical need for these exceptional doses. However, the screening will only apply to clients with chronic **non-cancer** pain.

For these clients, authorization will be required for all opioid narcotic prescriptions. HRSA will ask prescribers for additional information to verify the dose of opioid narcotics that is medically necessary for the client. The goal of the review and collaboration with the prescriber is to reduce misuse of opioid narcotics and to improve the quality of life of the client.

To help with the screening, prescribers should:

- Re-evaluate the prescribed therapy for clients with chronic non-cancer pain who are receiving high doses of opioids
- Consider tapering the opioid narcotics to the lowest effective dose or to an alternative pain medication
- Make referrals for mental health or chemical dependency assessment and treatment where necessary

WHY IS HRSA REQUIRING THIS NARCOTIC REVIEW FOR SOME CLIENTS?

Washington State is in the top 10 states in the nation for opioid prescription-related overdose or poisoning deaths. Department of Health death data indicates that more than 50 percent of Washington's deaths related to prescription narcotics are Medicaid clients. For this reason, HRSA has incorporated an evidence-based, medical necessity approach to high-dose narcotic prescriptions and adjunct therapies.

WHAT IS HRSA'S NARCOTIC REVIEW PROCESS?

- Clients to be selected for review are those with non-cancer pain receiving high doses of opioid narcotics
- Each narcotic prescription for these clients requires authorization as long as the client is in the narcotic review program
- Prescribers of these clients will be sent a 12-month narcotic profile and asked to review and verify that their prescription is appropriate and should be filled
- Prescribers will also be sent a form that can be used to provide medical justification for the high-dose prescription
- Taper plans may be discussed with the prescriber when appropriate
- Chart reviews and face-to-face evaluations by the University of Washington Medicine Center for Pain Relief may be provided
- HRSA may suggest referrals for mental health and or chemical dependency assessment and treatment as necessary
- Medications will not be discontinued unless proven not medically necessary or unsafe

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Jeff Thompson, M.D., Chief Medical Officer, HRSA, 360-725-1612
Siri Childs, Pharm D, Pharmacy Administrator, HRSA, 360-725-1564