

5 November 2021

Dear Pharmacist

Opioid quantity and prescription refill restrictions

We have taken measures to promote the responsible prescribing and dispensing of opioids, and to safeguard the wellbeing of our members. As such, we are introducing quantity limitations and are decreasing the number of prescription refills allowed on opioid-containing medicines in 2022. The new rule will be described as follows:

10514	Opioid: We have not paid this amount. This item has been claimed more than the allowed number of times in a three-month period.
10515	Opioid: We have not paid this amount. This item has been claimed more than the allowed number of times in a year.

The restriction of the use of opioid-containing medicines is being recognised as a clinically important trend both internationally and locally. This is due to global and local trends of opioid utilisation and the potential for the abuse of opioids. Excessive quantities of opioids can lead to addictive behaviour, so measures are being created to try to prevent this. Current measures that we have implemented are not enough to curb the use of these medicines as it allows for members to take excessive quantities over time.

If there is a legitimate need for an increased amount of medicine, we will evaluate it and grant authorisation on a clinical exception basis. In such instances we ask you, the pharmacist, to please contact the ProPBM call centre on 0860 PROPBM (776 726).

Limitations for opioid-containing medicines

For prescribed opioid-containing analgesics, for example, Stilpane® or Durogesic® patches, the limitation is an allowance of only 28 cumulative days of supply over a 90-day period at the recommended dose for members.

For over-the-counter medicine, for example, opioid-containing cough mixtures or Adco-Dol® and Syndol®, the limitation is an allowance of only 28 cumulative days of supply over a 90-day period at the recommended dose and quantity for members.

These amounts are based on the normal aches and pains that patients experience. If there is a more severe case that warrants an increased dose of opioid-containing analgesics, these will be reviewed separately.

We hope that these measures are recognised as a proactive initiative to protect our members and improve and enhance their lifestyles rather than an unnecessary prohibitive measure.

Regards



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