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Narcotic Coverage Changes

Last month, MOHLTC issued a release describing upcoming limitations to narcotic coverage. The higher strengths of a number of long-acting, potent narcotics are being dropped from ODB coverage, beginning on January 1, 2017.

The products and strengths affected will be: morphine 200 mg tablets, hydromorphone 24 and 30 mg capsules and fentanyl 75 and 100 mcg/hr patches. This change is being implemented to reduce inappropriate use, abuse and diversion of these medications. The recommendations were put forward by an expert panel of health care practitioners, and *Ontario's Committee to Evaluate Drugs* after analyzing opioid utilization trends in the province.

There will be no opportunity to obtain coverage for these medications through Ontario's *Extraordinary Access Program* or through the *Compassionate Review Policy*. The early warning will give physicians an opportunity to

taper doses slowly, so withdrawal reactions can be prevented.

Perhaps a small number of our residents will benefit from dose reductions. Most, who receive them, however, suffer from intractable pain and will experience greater discomfort. Unfortunately, the products are quite expensive, so continuing to use them may not be an option. When pain is not controlled, we may be put in a position where multiple tablets, capsules or patches will have to be used. Polypharmacy may also be encouraged, as combinations of different opioids or multiple drug classes may be required to control pain. I guess we'll have to wait and see, but for now we should be cautious about escalating doses, and begin to think about tapering, where possible.

Electronic Drug Record Book Training Video

We are completing production of a training video to assist staff using our new electronic Drug Record Book (eDRB). It should be ready next week, and can be used as a refresher or for training new or casual staff. It is ideal to add to existing educational packages, such as Surge Learning or as a stand-alone training tool.

Our newly developed eDRB is entirely digital and replaces your paper Drug Record Book.

Ordering and receiving medications is done entirely through the computer. The eDRB is easy to use and to this point has been rolled out to about half of our facilities. If you're still using paper, stay tuned. We will be installing it in your facility shortly.

Naloxone Kits

In response to multiple cases of narcotic overdose amongst members of the public, governments across the country have launched a naloxone support program. The program provides for pharmacies to dispense kits containing naloxone (2 amps), syringes, and a rescue breathing barrier to an individual who is using opioids. Past opioid users who are at risk of returning to opioid use or friends or family members who care for them are also eligible to receive the kit free of charge.

We have dispensed naloxone for stat use in some of our homes and provide inservicing regarding its use. Key points are that the full amp is to be given i.m., response should be rapid and can be repeated without risk and that the resident must be monitored, as naloxone wears off in 45 – 90 minutes, although the narcotic may still be at elevated levels. The new kit program gives us the opportunity to dispense directly to at risk residents.

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