

RETRODUR INTERVENTION NOTICE: PENTAZOCINE

September 20, 2012

Dear Prescriber,

The New York State Medicaid Drug Utilization Review (DUR) Program retrospectively reviews the prescribing and dispensing of outpatient prescription medications in order to ensure that prescriptions are appropriate, medically necessary, and are not likely to result in adverse medical outcomes. At the December 2, 2011 Board Meeting, the DUR Board reviewed pentazocine utilization within the NY Medicaid program.

Guidelines for pain management from the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) were presented to the DUR Board, as well as the most current FDA approved labeling.^{1,2} While considering utilization data and clinical information, the Board expressed concerns including the potential for withdrawal symptoms in opioid-dependent patients and the risk of misuse and abuse.

The Board recommended that informational letters be sent to prescribers of pentazocine in order to increase awareness of safety concerns and the high abuse potential associated with pentazocine therapy, as well as to highlight recently published pain guidelines that do not support the use of this drug. Pentazocine does not have preferred status on the NY Medicaid Preferred Drug List (PDL) and the use of a preferred product from the current pain guidelines is recommended.

The NCCN recommends against using mixed agonist-antagonists including pentazocine for adult cancer pain. It is further recommended that this agent not be used in combination with opioid agonists.² The Beers Criteria lists pentazocine as a potentially inappropriate medication to be avoided in older adults, as the drug may cause CNS effects more commonly than other narcotic drugs, and has mixed agonist and antagonist effects.

New York State Medicaid pharmacy claims data indicate that you have prescribed pentazocine. Please consider this information and the clinical appropriateness of pentazocine therapy, as the DUR Program is concerned that there may be utilization of this medication that is not consistent with current treatment guidelines and FDA-approved labeling.

In presenting this information to you, the DUR Program recognizes that safe and effective pharmacotherapy depends on the assessment of the patient's entire clinical profile. We ask that you consider the information provided regarding the prescribing of pentazocine therapy for your patients.

Thank you for your professional assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

John F. Naioti, Jr., R.Ph.
Manager, Drug Utilization Review Program

¹Yaksh TL, Wallace MS. Opioids, analgesia, and pain management. In: Brunton LL, Chabner BA, Knollmann BC, eds. Goodman and Gilman's The Pharmacologic Basis of Therapeutics. 12th ed.

²National Comprehensive Cancer Network. NCCN clinical practice guidelines on treatment of adult cancer pain. Available at: <http://www.nccn.org>. Accessed June 9, 2011