

Date

«Name»  
«Address»  
«Address»

**RE: Caring for Your Patients Using Narcotic Analgesics**

Dear Dr. «NAME»:

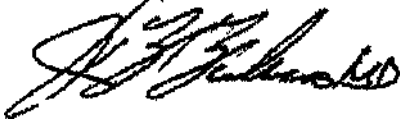
As I'm sure you are aware, we have a serious problem in West Virginia with the use of prescription medications. In our state, drug-related deaths increased over 500% between 1999 and 2007 and opiate abuse admissions to hospitals doubled in the past five years. In 2006, there were 295 overdose deaths in West Virginia that involved prescription drugs for patients with a history of substance abuse. Prescribing controlled substances in excess quantities for pain that cannot be relieved by them, or for inappropriate periods of time, invites diversion and misuse. This risk is especially intensified if the patient has a history of substance abuse or dependency.

The West Virginia Medicaid Program monitors prescription patterns through its drug utilization program. Pharmacy claims data indicates that you are a prescriber of significant volume of narcotic analgesics in the West Virginia Medicaid Program. As a high-volume narcotic prescriber, we want to make sure you are aware of certain resources available to improve the safety of such drug therapy.

The West Virginia Board of Medicine and the Board of Osteopathy recognize the need for physicians to provide appropriate and effective pain relief for patients. In May 2010, they re-adopted a Policy for the Use of Controlled Substances for the Treatment of Pain, which is available at <http://www.wvbom.wv.gov/opioid.pdf>. The policy was originally adopted in 2005. The policy, among other things, encourages the use of informed consent and written agreements or contracts detailing patient and provider responsibilities as part of the treatment plan when narcotics are employed. A template, which can be duplicated, is included. These documents should be part of the medical record. If you have not done so, please review this Board policy and ensure that you are following the appropriate guidelines in your practice. In addition, information about the Board of Pharmacy Prescription Monitoring Program is included. The drug monitoring database can provide you with information about your patients to ensure that they are not obtaining large quantities of controlled substances by doctor shopping.

We acknowledge that there may be clinical variables influencing an individual patient's management that are not apparent in claims data; however, we believe the information provided will assist you in caring for your patient(s). Certainly, claims data and the volume of specific drug prescribing alone do not adequately reflect the quality of your prescribing practices or the quality of the care you provide for your patients suffering from acute and/or chronic pain. We thank you for reviewing this information and caring for West Virginia Medicaid's patients and welcome the opportunity to discuss any comments or concerns you may have about our quality management program. Please feel free to call our office at 1-866-923-7208 with questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



James Becker, M.D.  
Medical Director  
Bureau for Medical Services



Ernest Miller, D.O.  
Chairman, Drug Utilization Review Board  
Bureau for Medical Services

References;

1. Huang B, Dawson DA, Stinson FS et al. Prevalence, correlates and comorbidity of nonmedical prescription drug use and drug use disorders in the United States; Results of the national Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions, *J Clin Psychiatry*, 2006; 67:1062-73.
2. Manchikanti L, Singh A, Therapeutic opioids: a ten-year perspective on the complexities and complications of the escalating use, abuse, and nonmedical use of opioids. *Pain Physician*. 2008; 11(2 Suppl):S63-88.