



High Dose Tramadol eAlert

November 10, 2015

Background:

Tramadol is a valuable opioid prescribed for pain relief with analgesic potency similar to codeine. Despite becoming a Schedule IV Federal controlled substance late last year, tramadol use is increasing in workers' compensation due in part to increasing controls around stronger opioids such as hydrocodone and oxycodone. Tramadol has dosage limits on how much can be taken in one day that are the same for new users as well as long-time users. These total daily limits of 400 mg for short-acting and 300 mg for long-acting tramadol may not be recognized by some prescribers as we are seeing tramadol prescribed in doses that exceed safe limits--not only wasting resources but putting the patient at risk for serious harm.

Impact:

When patients take too much tramadol, they are at risk for side effects that can result in mental problems, trouble breathing, seizures, even death. An overdose of tramadol is especially concerning because standard overdose treatments, including the opioid reversal drug naloxone, do not reverse all bad effects and some may even increase the risk of convulsions.

Our Position and Plan:

Healthcare Solutions' latest quality initiative is to reduce the recognized incidence of tramadol overdose in the claimants we serve. Important to this initiative are monitoring, reporting, education, and communication to all stakeholders: prescribers, pharmacists, and payers included.

This initial eAlert communication to you hopes to raise awareness of the problem of tramadol overprescribing and the potential for overdose and bad outcomes in your claimants. In the future, Healthcare Solutions will send you eAlert email messages regarding instances of suspected overprescribing of tramadol involving your claimants to keep you informed of this important clinical concern. You may also see new Drug Utilization Review authorization requests if the prescriber continues to prescribe tramadol products over the recommended maximum dosages.

For questions regarding this eAlert or to learn more about our Clinical Rx Services, please contact your dedicated Account Executive.

Healthcare Solutions' clinical pharmacist team actively monitors and communicates timely news and announcements from the FDA affecting prescription drug management. We are committed to notifying you of important information as well as offering consultation on how these updates may impact your claimants and pharmacy management program.

Disclaimer

This alert is offered as a general summary of information retrieved from a variety of sources, including scientific literature and clinical experience. We seek to provide useful, current reference material, but do not claim to provide a comprehensive review and cannot guarantee the accuracy of information presented. Opinions are those of individual authors, and do not necessarily represent the recommendation or endorsement of Healthcare Solutions. This communication does not constitute medical advice.

