

****Suboxone® (brand) SL Tablet Availability****

DVHA Preferred Products for Opiate Dependency

March 26th, 2013

Dear Prescriber:

As you know, the Department of Vermont Health Access (DVHA) has listed Suboxone® Sublingual Film as the preferred Suboxone® dosage form on our Preferred Drug List (PDL) since January 3rd, 2011. The film has several advantages, including compact unit-dose pouches that are individually numbered, child-resistant and easy to carry, in addition to dosage forms that are available in four different strengths and cannot be crushed and snorted.

Reckitt Benckiser Pharmaceuticals has provided a notification that it is discontinuing the SL tablet formulation for safety reasons (i.e., based on higher reported rates of pediatric exposure when the tablets were ingested accidentally by children as reported by poison control centers) compared to its newer formulation, Suboxone® film. While the production of brand Suboxone® tablets ceased on March 18, 2013, supplies are anticipated to be available for several weeks after that date through wholesalers.

On February 22, 2013, the FDA approved a first-time generic for Suboxone® sublingual tablets. Both the generic pharmaceutical companies Actavis and Amneal received FDA approval of their abbreviated new drug applications (ANDAs) for buprenorphine/naloxone SL tablets, AB-rated generic equivalents to Suboxone® tablets. Unfortunately, the net cost of the generic buprenorphine/naloxone SL tablets remains very high compared to both Suboxone® film and brand Suboxone® tablets (while still available). This sizable cost differential is anticipated to continue for a prolonged period of time, and we will continue to monitor this market very closely. Suboxone® continues to be the most utilized and costly medication for the DVHA so it is extremely important that it is prescribed in the most cost effective manner. Unlike other states, the DVHA has not enforced limitations on duration of therapy.

DVHA will be proactively reaching out to prescribers to request that patients who have never been trialed on the film formulation, be switched from the tablets to the film dosage form. While new patients have been required to start on the film preparation, there remain a sizable number of patients who continued on tablet therapy after the film introduction. For those patients who must remain on the tablet formulation, Suboxone® brand will be preferred until it is no longer available. For these patients, please continue to write for the Suboxone brand, as pharmacies may dispense brand or generic tablets, depending on availability at the time of dispensing.

As a reminder, Suboxone® when prescribed for opiate dependency (its only FDA approved indication) is designed to be dosed once daily. Daily doses should be made up of the fewest number of dosage units (now easier with 4 different film strengths). Films should never be divided as the child protection is then lost from the remainder of the dose.

We greatly appreciate your understanding and cooperation with these efforts. If you have questions related to these changes in benefit coverage, please feel free to contact our on-site Catamaran Clinical Consultant, Diane Neal, R.Ph, at 1-802-879-5605.

Thank you for your continued support of the State of Vermont's pharmacy programs.

Sincerely,



Nancy Hogue, Pharm.D.
Director of Pharmacy Services