

Subject: Colorado Opioid Treatment Guidelines

Effective March 2, 2017, Colorado Rule 17, Exhibit 5, Cumulative Trauma Conditions regarding Medical Treatment Guidelines with specific opioid treatment guidelines has been amended. In response to this change in prescribing law, First Script has established a program-wide informational message to alert client adjusters to opiate prescriptions which meet the rules' maximum duration of 14 days. That message reads as follows:

“Per Colorado Treatment Guidelines, initial fills of opioid medications are authorized for a maximum of 14 days. If you would like to authorize more than a 14 day supply, it is acceptable when functional improvement is documented.”

As is noted by the message, Colorado law has adopted specific guidelines in regards to documentation for prescriptions beyond 14 days. The information provided below is an overview of the adopted Colorado Rule 17.

- Maximum duration is two weeks. Use beyond two weeks is acceptable in appropriate cases when functional improvement is documented. Refer to the Division's Chronic Pain Disorder Medical Treatment Guidelines, which give a detailed discussion regarding medication use in chronic pain management. Use beyond thirty days after non-traumatic injuries, or six weeks post-operatively is not recommended. If longer treatment is justified, the physician should access the Colorado Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) and follow recommendations in the Chronic Pain Guideline.
- Opioids medications should be prescribed with strict time, quantity, and duration guidelines, and with definitive cessation parameters. Opioids should be primarily reserved for the treatment of severe upper extremity pain. There are circumstances where prolonged use of opioids is justified based upon specific diagnosis and in pre- and post-operative patients. In these and other cases, it should be documented and justified. In mild-to-moderate cases of upper extremity pain, opioid medication should be used cautiously on a case-by-case basis. Adverse effects include respiratory depression, the development of physical and psychological dependence, and impaired alertness.
- Optimum duration is usually three to five days post-operatively.
- Pain is subjective in nature and should be evaluated using a pain scale and assessment of function to rate effectiveness of the opioid prescribed. It is recommended that the provider access the Colorado PDMP before prescribing opioids. The PDMP allows the prescribing physician to see most of the controlled substances prescribed by other physicians for an individual patient. Any use beyond the maximum should be documented and justified based on the diagnosis and/or invasive procedures.

For more information, please contact your Account Manager.