Workers' Comp

North Carolina Utilization Rules for Opioid and Other Pharmacological Pain Management Treatment

June 19, 2018
2 MIN READ

When do the new rules apply?

The rules apply to all affected treatment in all affected claims on or after **May 1, 2018.**

Affected claims: Any NC claim unless the patient has been receiving a "*targeted controlled substance*" for **more than 12 consecutive weeks immediately prior to 5/1/18.**

Affected treatment: Pain management treatment for non-cancer pain in WC claims.

Exception: medications administered in a health care setting.

What's in the new rules?

Controlled Substance Reporting System (CSRS) mandate – Effective Nov. 1, 2018

- Requires prescribers to check CSRS at certain points in treatment.

Clinical guidelines and preauthorization requirements – Effective May 1, 2018

- Different guidelines for:
  - 1st prescription in "*acute phase*"
  - Subsequent prescriptions in "*acute phase*"
  - Prescriptions in "*chronic phase"*
- Requirement to "consider" prescribing an opioid antagonist in certain scenarios.
- Suggestions to "consider" non-pharmacological treatment and tapering/discontinuation.
- Preauthorization requirements for certain medications prescribed in a "*chronic phase"*

"Companion Guide" — Provides guidance as to how the Commission expects the rules to be implemented

New Ex Parte Communication Forms – released with the "Companion Guide"

Important Terminology

"Acute Phase" – Treatment within 12 weeks of:

- a compensable injury,
- an aggravation of a compensable injury, or
- a surgery for a compensable injury
  (Note that there can be multiple "*acute phases*" in the same claim.)

"Chronic Phase" – Treatment more than 12 weeks from the beginning of the last "*acute phase*."

Transition to Compliance with the Rules

- No "legacy claims" or "legacy period." (Claims that aren't affected by the rules will never be affected by the rules).
- For affected claims, Companion Guide recommends a transition period of up to 6 months.

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