Workers' Comp

Ask The Pharmacist: Deprescribing Offers an Often Overlooked Opportunity to Support Recovery

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Could my injured employee's medications be creating barriers to recovery?

Early in a workers' compensation or auto claim, treatment focuses on relieving pain, improving function, and returning to activity and work. As recovery progresses medication plans need to be reviewed to ensure they continue to support recovery. Reducing or discontinuing certain medications when appropriate can be an important step toward optimizing outcomes. This process is known as deprescribing.

What Is Deprescribing?

Deprescribing involves more than reducing medications. As recovery progresses, some medications may provide fewer benefits while increasing the risk of side effects or drug interactions. Deprescribing is the planned and supervised reduction or discontinuation of medications that are no longer needed, effective, or aligned with a patient's current treatment goals. It can be valuable for individuals receiving long-term treatment for chronic pain or other injury-related conditions.

Why Medications Outlive Their Usefulness

Many injuries initially require short-term medication management to address acute pain, inflammation, sleep disturbances, muscle spasms, or emotional stress related to the injury. Over time these medications can become part of the routine even when they are no longer supporting recovery or begin to pose risks.

This does not mean the medication was prescribed inappropriately. As an injured individual's needs change, medications should be regularly reviewed to make sure they still support treatment and recovery goals. Regular

medication reviews can identify opportunities to simplify treatment while managing symptoms and maintaining patient safety.

Safe Tapering Strategies

Stopping a medication isn't always as simple as deciding it is no longer needed. For many therapies, particularly those used for extended periods, abrupt discontinuation can be uncomfortable and, in some cases, unsafe. Successful deprescribing requires a thoughtful and individualized approach. Gradual tapering helps minimize withdrawal symptoms, reduces anxiety about medication changes, and makes the process safer and more manageable.

This is important for medications such as opioids, some muscle relaxants, sleep aids, and other therapies associated with physical dependence after long-term use.
Enlyte Pharmacy Solutions offers TaperRx, a program designed to provide customized tapering schedules based on current clinical practices and an individual's existing medication regimen. These recommendations help guide a gradual approach to medication reduction while prioritizing safety, comfort, and recovery.

Supporting Functional Improvement

Some medications can cause side effects that make it harder for injured individuals to participate in rehabilitation, daily activities, or return to work.

Common medication-related concerns may include:

- Daytime drowsiness
- Slower thinking or difficulty concentrating
- Dizziness or balance issues
- Fatigue
- Challenges managing multiple prescriptions

When medications are reduced or discontinued under medical supervision, individuals may feel more alert, increase engagement in therapy, and function better in daily life.

When to Consider Pharmacist Review

Medication decisions depend on each patient's medical history, symptoms, treatment goals and the risks and benefits of continued use. A pharmacist-led medication review can assess whether medications continue to support treatment including:

- Medication plan effectiveness
- Safety concerns
- Therapeutic duplication
- Potential drug interactions
- Opportunities for optimization

Pharmacists can identify when deprescribing may be appropriate and recommend next steps to the treating provider. They can also help adjusters understand how medications are influencing overall recovery and functional progress.

Ensuring Medications Support Recovery

For adjusters, deprescribing offers a proactive approach to keep treatment aligned with recovery. Regular medication reviews can remove barriers to prolonged disability or delayed improvement.

Deprescribing is not about taking medication away from injured individuals or simply reducing costs. It is about making sure medications remain purposeful, effective, and support recovery throughout the life of a claim.

For help with a medication review, contact your Client Services Manager or reach out to the pharmacy team at AskThePharmacist@enlyte.com.

This information is intended as a general overview. Specific medical or medication-related questions should be reviewed with a health care professional, such as the prescribing physician or dispensing pharmacist.

Do you have a workers' compensation or auto-related pharmacy question? Send us an email at AskThePharmacist@enlyte.com.

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