

TexanPlus[®] HMO/HMO-POS

Medicare Advantage Health Plans

Prescribing Narcotic Drugs to Your TexanPlus[®] Patients

Dear Provider,

With nationwide concern about the misuse of hydrocodone combination products, many doctors are restricting their patients from obtaining or refilling these drugs. This has led to confusion or frustration for patients who have properly used medications like Vicodin[®], Lortab[®], and Norco[®] for pain and discomfort. When these individuals face barriers in obtaining helpful medication, it can lead to complaints and the loss of valued patients. Additionally, sudden drug withdrawal can provoke either a narcotic withdrawal syndrome or a pain crisis. Both of these are dangerous and can lead to other complications or hospitalization.

We share your concerns about prescribing hydrocodone combination products, which are classified as Schedule II drugs by the DEA. We are aware that they require significant administrative challenges for providers. But we caution doctors against refusing to prescribe these medications across the board, because in some situations, continuing on these drugs may truly be in the patient's best interest.

For this reason, we suggest that you review each patient's pain management needs individually before making your final determination. This can help to improve patient satisfaction and reduce unnecessary complaints against providers.

How We Can Help

To promote patient understanding, you can be assured that we will do our part to help educate our members about the dangers of long-term narcotic use. And, to assist our network providers in caring for their TexanPlus patients, we will continue providing you with direct, one-on-one support through our Provider Relations team. Additionally, we have prepared the tools enclosed for your reference when speaking with your patients about these drugs.

We appreciate the care you provide to our TexanPlus members and are here to help you with any concerns or questions. If you need support in caring for your patients, please do not hesitate to contact me or your Provider Relations Representative directly.

Sincerely,



Trevor Rabie MD, FCCP
Chief Medical Officer
Universal American
713-314-1600

Provider Tools for Prescribing Narcotic Drugs

What can prescribers do to safely and effectively prescribe opioids for chronic non-cancer pain*

- Opioid Treatment agreement
- Screen for prior or current substance abuse/misuse (alcohol, illicit drugs, heavy tobacco use)
- Screen for depression
- Prudent use of random urine drug screenings to detect diversion or non-prescribed drugs
- Avoidance of concomitant use of sedative-hypnotics or benzodiazepines
- Tracking of pain and function to recognize tolerance and track effectiveness
- Track daily morphine equivalent dose (MED) using an online dosing calculator
- Seek pain consult if MED reaches 80-120 mg and pain and function have not substantially improved
- Use the state Prescription Drug Monitoring Program to monitor all sources of controlled substances**

*Franklin G. Opioids for Chronic Noncancer Pain: A position paper of the American Academy of Neurology 2014;83:1277-1284.

**<https://www.texaspatx.com/Login.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2fdefault.aspx>

What is The Texas Prescription Program: Prescription Access in Texas (PAT)^{1,2}

Web Address: <https://www.texaspatx.com/Login.aspx>

The **Texas Prescription Program** was created to monitor Schedule II through Schedule V controlled substance prescriptions. Diversion of prescription drugs is a significant abuse problem, and this program was created to be an efficient, cost-effective tool for investigating and preventing drug diversion. The Texas Prescription program can be used by practitioners and pharmacists to verify their own records and inquire about patients.

The **Prescription Access in Texas (PAT) web portal database** allows practitioners real-time access to their patient's prescription information and their own prescribing information. Additionally, pharmacists, law enforcement, and board investigators may be granted varying levels of access to evaluate: practitioner prescribing information, pharmacy dispensing information, and patient prescription information.

To complete registration, the following information must be provided with current licensing as instructed:
Personal identification verification, DEA Number, DPS License Number, State of Texas Board License

Power Search is an advanced web application search engine used by PAT, to accommodate known associations preventing successful search results, such as: spelling errors, abbreviations, name associations.

Data queries are limited to **1 year** of data

Pharmacies are required by the Texas Health & Safety Code, Chapter 481, to report prescription dispensing history within **seven (7) days**.

All accounts of **Schedule II-V controlled substances** (excluding ephedrine) in the state of Texas are included in the database records**

¹ Texas Prescription Program: <http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/rsd/PrescriptionProgram/index.htm>

² Frequently asked questions: <https://www.texaspatx.com/Tutorial/Doc/PATIIFAQs.pdf>