

N E W S L I N E

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DWC Posts Proposed “Guideline for the Use of Opioids to Treat Work-Related Injuries” to Online Forum for Public Comment

The Division of Workers’ Compensation (DWC) has posted a proposed “Guideline for the Use of Opioids to Treat Work-Related Injuries” to its online forum. Members of the public may review and comment on the proposal until April 21, 2014.

“Opioid misuse is a national concern. California is on the forefront of providing appropriate care and improving outcomes by issuing these guidelines,” said Department of Industrial Relations Director Christine Baker.

Currently, the Medical Treatment Utilization Schedule (MTUS) addresses the use of opioids in the Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines. DWC intends to remove the existing parts of the MTUS that refer to opioid use and instead revise the MTUS to include this proposed guideline.

“We created separate guidance for the use of opioids in the California workers’ compensation system to highlight the importance of appropriately treating workers in pain while also ensuring safety when using these medications,” said DWC Executive Medical Director Dr. Rupali Das. “A key goal of this guideline is to ensure restoration of function and early return to work following an injury.”

The proposed “Guideline for the Use of Opioids to Treat Work-Related Injuries” was developed in cooperation with the multidisciplinary Medical Evidence Evaluation Advisory Committee (MEEAC). The recommendations are derived from the best available evidence-based guidelines and scientific studies.

The proposed guideline provides a set of best practices for considering opioids in the management of acute, subacute, post-operative, and chronic pain related to work-related injuries. Recommendations include when it is appropriate to consider adding

opioids to the treatment regimen; medications to avoid when using opioids; methods and tools to monitor patients on opioids; the need to educate patients about the adverse effects of opioid use; and responsible storage and disposal of opioids. In addition, useful tools and resources for patient management are provided.

The guideline is divided into four parts: Part A, a summary, abbreviated treatment protocols, and introduction; Part B, complete recommendations, and appendices containing useful tools; Part C, findings to support the recommendations; and Part D, a compilation of recommendations from a review of existing guidelines.

The MTUS regulations can be found in Title 8 of the California Code of Regulations, beginning with section 9792.20. The proposed guidelines will be in a new section, 9792.24.4.

The forum can be found online on the DWC forums web page under "[current forums.](#)"

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