

# Memorandum

**To:** Gold Coast Health Plan Primary Care Providers

**From:** Kim Timmerman, Director of Quality Improvement  
Anne Freese, Pharm D., Pharmacy Director

**Re:** **Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain: MCAS Performance Measures**

**Date:** August 6, 2019

More than 11.5 million Americans, ages 12 and older, reported misuse of prescription pain medicine in 2016, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Additionally, the CDC reports more than 130 Americans die every day from an opioid overdose. The rise in opioid overdose deaths has been linked to opioid prescribing patterns, as millions of Americans are treated with opioids for symptoms of chronic pain each year. Because of this, Primary Care Providers (PCP) have expressed concerns about patient addiction and insufficient training in prescribing opioids.

## **Managed Care Accountability Set (MCAS) Measures**

Gold Coast Health Plan (GCHP) aims to assist Plan providers with the resources, tools, and support needed to avoid high-risk opioid prescribing patterns. Under the new Managed Care Accountability Set (MCAS) measures, rolled out by the state Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) for Measurement Year (MY) 2019, GCHP will begin monitoring opioid prescription use through two performance measures:

- **Concurrent Use of Opioids and Benzodiazepines (COB):** Percentage of beneficiaries 18 years of age and older with concurrent use of prescription opioids and benzodiazepines.
- **Use of Opioids at High Dosage in Persons without Cancer (OHD):** Percentage of beneficiaries 18 years of age and older who received prescriptions for opioids with an average daily dosage  $\geq$  90 MME over a period of 90 days or more.

The COB and OHD measures evaluate Plan members with prescriptions for opioids in combination with benzodiazepines or at high dosages. These two measures, created by the Pharmacy Quality Alliance, evaluate prescribing patterns that are associated with an increased risk of opioid use disorder, overdose, or death. Both measures exclude patients with a cancer diagnosis or who are in hospice. Outcomes on these measures, collected using administrative pharmacy data, will be available in August 2020.

## **Provider Resources**

1. [CDC Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain](#) is a comprehensive resource that provides recommendations for the prescribing of opioid pain medication for patients 18 years of age and older in primary care settings.

This guideline addresses patient-centered clinical practices. The three primary focus areas are:

- I. Determining when to initiate or continue opioids for chronic pain**
    - a. Selection of non-pharmacologic therapy, non-opioid pharmacologic therapy, opioid therapy.
    - b. Establishment of treatment goals.
    - c. Discussion of risk and benefits of therapy with patients.
  - II. Opioid selection, dosage, duration, follow-up, and discontinuation**
    - a. Immediate-release or extended-release and long-acting opioids.
    - b. Dosage consideration.
    - c. Duration of treatment.
    - d. Considerations for follow-up and discontinuation of opioid therapy.
  - III. Assessing risk and addressing harms of opioid use**
    - a. Evaluation of risk factors for opioid-related harms and ways to mitigate patient risk.
    - b. Review of prescription drug monitoring program (PDMP) data.
    - c. Use of urine drug test.
    - d. Considerations for co-prescribing benzodiazepines.
    - e. Arrangement of treatment for opioid use disorder.
2. [Opioid Prescribing Guideline – Recommendations for Safe Use of Opioid Medications](#), developed by GCHP's Pharmacy Department, is a toolkit of opioid prescribing guidelines. The resource also offers details on daily recommended oral doses.
  3. [Pocket Card for Prescribing Opioid for Chronic Pain](#) created by Turn the Tide RX, is an adaptation of the CDC prescribing guidelines and can be used for quick references.

### Contact

For more information on the COB or OHD performance measures, please contact the Quality Improvement Department at [QualityImprovement@goldchp.org](mailto:QualityImprovement@goldchp.org).

To learn more about GHCP's Pharmacy Department, resources for prescribing opioids, or other pharmacy related questions, please contact [Pharmacy@goldchp.org](mailto:Pharmacy@goldchp.org).