BC PharmaCare Newsletter

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QuickLinks

B.C. SMOKING CESSATION PROGRAM

Effective **September 30, 2011**, PharmaCare will be launching the B.C. Smoking Cessation Program which helps B.C residents stop smoking by assisting them with the cost of smoking cessation aids. The program offers coverage for one of two treatment options: prescription smoking cessation drugs or non-prescription nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) products.

Complete information and resources for patients, pharmacists and prescribers are available on the PharmaCare website at www.health.gov.bc.ca/pharmacare/stop-smoking.

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Overview

Patient eligibility criteria

The program is open to B.C. residents who wish to stop using tobacco.

To be eligible for the nicotine replacement therapy program, patients must have valid, active Medical Services Plan (MSP) coverage.

To be eligible for PharmaCare coverage of prescription smoking cessation drugs, patients must be registered for Fair PharmaCare or covered by one of the following PharmaCare plans:

- Permanent Residents of Licensed Residential Care Facilities (Plan B)
- Recipients of B.C. Income Assistance plan (Plan C)
- No-Charge Psychiatric Medication plan (Plan G)

Who cannot take part?

- Non- residents of B.C.
- People who are covered under a federal government drug plan (e.g., Armed Forces, RCMP, NIHB etc.)

Coverage details

Each calendar year, eligible B.C residents may receive **one or the other** of the following:

- coverage for **ONE** of the designated prescription smoking cessation drugs for a single continuous course of treatment lasting up to 12 consecutive weeks (84 consecutive days). The actual coverage patients receive depends on the rules of the patient's PharmaCare plan (see below).

    OR

- 100% coverage for **ONE** of the designated nicotine replacement therapy products for a single continuous course of treatment lasting up to 12 consecutive weeks (84 consecutive days).

PharmaCare plan rules for prescription smoking cessation drugs

Patients covered under Plan B (Permanent Residents of Licensed Residential Care Facilities), Plan C (Recipients of B.C. Income Assistance) or Plan G (No-Charge Psychiatric Medication plan) receive 100% coverage of the eligible cost of the drug.

Coverage for Fair PharmaCare patients is subject to annual income-based deductibles and family maximums.

Medications covered under the B.C. Smoking Cessation Program

PharmaCare covers only the following products as part of the B.C. Smoking Cessation Program:

1. Zyban®, the version of bupropion used for smoking cessation
2. Champix® (varenicline)
3. Thrive™ NRT chewing gum in two strengths
4. Habitrol® NRT patches in three strengths

Refer to the list of eligible smoking cessation medications for details, including product DINs, PINs and product ordering numbers. This list will be updated as needed and is available at www.health.gov.bc.ca/pharmacare/pdf/sc-list.pdf.

Important note on Zyban® eligibility for coverage

Of the different versions of bupropion, PharmaCare will cover only the **Zyban**® product for smoking cessation; Wellbutrin®, Wellbutrin XL® and generic bupropion will not be covered for smoking cessation but will remain as Limited Coverage benefits for depression.

Important note on NRT product eligibility for coverage

Only eligible NRT gum and patches will be covered at the designated price as part of the B.C. Smoking Cessation Program. Other brands or product types (e.g. lozenges, inhalers) will not be covered as part of this program.

Information on eligible NRT gum and patch pricing was previously announced on September 15, 2011, in PharmaCare Newsletter 11-010 .

Program policies and procedures

The B.C. Smoking Cessation Program policies and procedures are set forth in full in the **Smoking Cessation Program Policies and Procedures for Pharmacists** available at: www.health.gov.bc.ca/pharmacare/pdf/sc-ppm.pdf.

> The Smoking Cessation Program Policies and Procedures for Pharmacists document is the authoritative resource for B.C. Smoking Cessation Program policy and procedures and should be the primary source of information for pharmacists. It will be updated as needed.

How patients obtain eligible prescription smoking cessation drugs

Patients will need a prescription from their physician to receive eligible prescription medications.

When patients fill their prescription smoking cessation drug for the first time

Each fill of a prescription smoking cessation drug is limited to a 28-day maximum supply. Patients cannot obtain the full 12-week (84-day) supply of a prescription drug with a single fill. Instead, patients will receive a supply lasting 4 weeks (28 days) at a time.

Dispenses of more than the allowable 28-day maximum will not be covered. Refer to the "Maximum Days' Supply Per Fill" section in the Smoking Cessation Program Policies and Procedures for Pharmacists for details.

Note: PharmaCare recognizes that the pack size of a particular product may result in minor overruns in treatment duration (e.g., six days over the course of treatment for blister-packed products with a 30 day supply as in the case of Zyban®). These small overruns are deemed acceptable.

When patients first fill their prescription, please remind them that the Refilling Prescriptions Too Soon policy applies, and they should not, therefore, order another fill until they have less than 14 days' supply left.

- Pharmacists will be reimbursed a maximum of 3 dispensing fees over the 12 week course of treatment covered by the Smoking Cessation Program.
- The **Frequency of Dispensing Policy** applies to the prescription smoking cessation drugs. For more information, see Frequency of Dispensing.

How patients obtain NRTs that are eligible for coverage

Patients must first register with the B.C. Smoking Cessation Program by calling HealthLink BC at 8-1-1.

Patients cannot register for the program until September 30, 2011.

Subject to treatment course limits, eligible NRT products will be 100% covered for eligible B.C. residents and will be available by direct mail or through community pharmacies.

For patients who choose to receive their eligible NRT product from a community pharmacy, HealthLink BC will issue **a unique reference number** for each fill**.** A different reference number **must be presented** at the pharmacy for each fill.

When patients fill their NRT product for the first time

Each fill of an NRT product must be entered using the correct PIN into PharmaNet as a separate dispense and must include a unique reference number from HealthLink BC in the SIG field.

Patients may require pharmacist assistance in

- ensuring that nicotine replacement therapy is the best smoking cessation aid for them, and
- selecting the best covered product and strength for their circumstances.

Patients are to receive the NRT in 3 dispenses of 28 days each. Refer to the "Maximum Days' Supply Per Fill" policy in the **Smoking Cessation Program Policies and Procedures for Pharmacists** for details (www.health.gov.bc.ca/pharmacare/pdf/sc-ppm.pdf).

When patients pick up their first fill of nicotine gum or patches, you may wish to remind them that they must contact HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 to obtain a new reference number for each subsequent fill. Because the Refilling Prescriptions Too Soon policy applies, patients should not order subsequent fills until they have less than a 14 days' supply of NRTs left.

For details on entering NRT claims, refer to the section on processing claims for NRT products in the **Smoking Cessation Program Policies and Procedures for Pharmacists** (www.health.gov.bc.ca/pharmacare/pdf/sc-ppm.pdf).

> **Eligible patients should incur no charges when receiving designated NRTs covered as part of the B.C. Smoking Cessation program.** Patients do not need to meet a deductible to be eligible for 100% reimbursement. As a reminder, under the Full Payment Policy, pharmacies must not charge a 'co-payment' for any costs to patients who are receiving full coverage under a PharmaCare plan.

When patients fill their NRT product for the second and third time

Each fill of an NRT product must be entered into PharmaNet as a separate dispense and must include a new HealthLink BC reference number in the SIG field.

Note: Patients must contact HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 to obtain a new reference number for each fill.

For details on entering claims for subsequent NRT fills, refer to the sections on subsequent fills and processing claims for NRT products in the Smoking Cessation Program Policies and Procedures for Pharmacists available at www.health.gov.bc.ca/pharmacare/pdf/sc-ppm.pdf.

- Pharmacists will be reimbursed a maximum of 3 dispensing fees over the 12 week course of treatment covered by the Smoking Cessation Program.
- The **Frequency of Dispensing Policy** applies to the NRT gum and patch covered under this program. For more information, see Frequency of Dispensing.

If a patient reports an adverse reaction

When a patient reports an adverse reaction during treatment with bupropion, varenicline, or an NRT, please update the information in their PharmaNet medication history. Please also report the adverse reaction to Health Canada through the Health Canada Drug and Health Products' Adverse Reaction Reporting Program.

Questions about coverage

Prescription drugs

Patients covered under Fair PharmaCare may have to pay for part, or all, of their prescription costs depending on whether they have met their annual deductible and family maximum. Patients can find more info as follows:

- See the "How Fair PharmaCare coverage works" on the PharmaCare Fair PharmaCare information sheet for an explanation of deductibles and maximums (www.health.gov.bc.ca/pharmacare/pdf/FPC01.pdf).

- Contact Health Insurance BC if they want to know how much they have accumulated towards their deductible or family maximum. Contact information is available at www.health.gov.bc.ca/pharmacare/contacts.html.

NRT products

Claims with missing, expired or repeated* reference numbers are subject to recovery upon audit. *A repeated reference number is one that has been used two or more times for the same patient.

Patients who undertake a course of smoking cessation prescription drug treatment for which PharmaCare pays any part of the cost will not be able to obtain free NRTs in the same calendar year.

Patients can be referred to Health Insurance BC to determine when they will next be able to receive a free supply of NRTs.

Resources

For pharmacists

Visit www.health.gov.bc.ca/pharmacare/stop-smoking/pcist-intro.html .

For patients

Patients can

- Visit the B.C. Smoking Cessation Program website to find detailed information about the program, including information on eligibility, coverage and registration procedures for the nicotine replacement therapy gums and patch (www.health.gov.bc.ca/pharmacare/stop-smoking/patient-intro.html).

- Read the B.C. Smoking Cessation Program **Patient Information Sheet**. This is an easy-to-print document that provides an overview of the Smoking Cessation Program (www.health.gov.bc.ca/pharmacare/pdf/pc-scp.pdf).

- Learn about smoking cessation strategies from QuitNow Services by visiting www.quitnow.ca or calling 8-1-1. QuitNow's smoking cessation information and services include information on how to use NRTs.

- Visit the Healthy Families BC's Prescription for Health program website which provides health risk assessment and lifestyle support services to people who smoke (www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/healthy-lifestyles-prescription-for-health.php).

PHARMACARE COVERAGE FOR BUPROPION (ZYBAN®) AND VARENICLINE (CHAMPIX®) FOR SMOKING CESSATION

Effective **September 30, 2011**, the prescription drugs bupropion 150mg ER (Zyban®) and varenicline 0.5mg and 1mg (Champix®) will be listed as Limited Coverage benefits under Fair PharmaCare, and Plans B, C, and G.

The coverage criteria for bupropion and varenicline are as follows: for tobacco cessation treatment and where the tobacco user is ready to quit. Please note that although these are Limited Coverage benefits, **no Special Authority request is required**.

Actual coverage for bupropion or varenicline is subject to the rules of the patient's PharmaCare plan including any annual deductible requirement.

Zyban® is the only brand of bupropion eligible for PharmaCare coverage under the BC Smoking Cessation Program. Generic bupropion is not a benefit when prescribed for smoking cessation. Wellbutrin®, Wellbutrin XL® and generic bupropion are not covered for smoking cessation but will remain as Limited Coverage benefits for depression (Special Authority is required).

Each calendar year, eligible BC residents will receive coverage for a single continuous course of treatment lasting up to 12 consecutive weeks (84 consecutive days), of one of bupropion **OR** varenicline **OR** nicotine patch **OR** nicotine gum.