

Ontario to Stop Paying for High-Dose Opioids

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On 20 July 2016, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care posted a Notice that it will be removing higher strength doses of long-acting opioids from the Ontario Drug Benefit (ODB) Program Formulary, out of growing concerns regarding the inappropriate use, abuse and diversion of prescription narcotics.

The changes were made following recommendations by a Pain Medication Formulary Review Committee, which was convened to conduct a class review of narcotic medications prescribed for pain management. The committee included clinical experts in fields such as pain, addiction, clinical pharmacology, family medicine and pharmacy.

The changes are to take effect as part of the January 2017 ODB Formulary update and will result in the de-listing of drugs such as 200 mg tablets of morphine, 24 and 30 mg capsules of hydromorphone and 75 and 100 mcg per hour patches of fentanyl.

The ODB Program covers the cost of drugs for a large number of Ontarians, including persons who are over 65, live in a long-term care home, receive social assistance or who have high drug costs relative to their income.

By making the above changes, Ontario will become the first province to stop paying for higher doses of long-acting opioids.

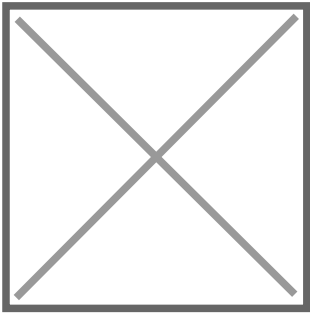
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