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### \*\*\*Attention Medicaid Providers and Pharmacies\*\*\*

#### **Important Information Regarding Injectable Naltrexone (Vivitrol) - Effective November 1, 2016**

Medication assisted therapy (MAT) encompasses opioid agonist treatment and opioid antagonist treatment for persons with opioid use disorder (OUD). Opioid agonist or antagonist treatment may be a life-saving intervention for OUD. Both methadone and buprenorphine can be prescribed to alleviate symptoms of opioid withdrawal, block opioid use, and allow the patient to begin to focus on improving their overall health. Relapse rates without medication-assisted treatment are substantial for OUD use disorder; therefore, long-term treatment may be the goal.

#### **What is injectable naltrexone?**

Naltrexone is an opioid antagonist that has also been shown to be effective in reducing relapse in OUD. Naltrexone is available in oral (naltrexone) and long-acting injectable formulations (naltrexone extended release injection suspension). Literature demonstrates that the long-acting injectable is more effective than placebo in preventing relapse. It is unclear when naltrexone should be prescribed versus opioid agonist treatment. Long-term comparison studies of opioid antagonist versus opioid agonist therapy in OUD is currently being completed. Because patients receiving naltrexone must be opioid free for at least 7 to 10 days, there is an increased risk for opioid overdose prior to starting treatment. Patients should be appropriately educated prior to offering naltrexone.

#### **Who is a good candidate for injectable naltrexone?**

Medication-assisted treatment with extended-release injectable naltrexone reduces the risk of relapse to opioid use and helps control cravings. Extended-release injectable naltrexone is particularly useful for people exiting a controlled setting where abstinence has been enforced such as jail or residential rehabilitation or in situations where maintenance with an opioid agonist is not available or appropriate. People who misuse prescription opioids benefit from medication assisted treatment as much as people abusing heroin. Naltrexone has also shown efficacy in treating alcohol use disorder.

#### **What is Vivitrol?**

Vivitrol is the brand name of the once-monthly long acting injectable formulation of naltrexone. It is FDA approved for the treatment of alcohol dependence in patients who are able to abstain from alcohol in an outpatient setting. Patients should not be actively drinking at the time of initial VIVITROL administration. Vivitrol is also indicated for the prevention of relapse to opioid dependence, following opioid detoxification. Naltrexone can be prescribed by any healthcare provider who is licensed to prescribe medications. Special training is not required; the medication can be administered in OTP clinics.

#### **What are some pros and cons of injectable naltrexone vs oral medications?**

Retention in treatment has sometimes been problematic when patients are asked to adhere to daily doses of oral naltrexone. A monthly injection of naltrexone, instead of daily dosing, may improve patients' adherence to their medication regimens. Extended-release injectable naltrexone has a higher pharmacy cost than buprenorphine and methadone, but some data suggest that its use may reduce inpatient admissions, emergency room visits, and other health system costs. Nonetheless, the higher pharmacy cost of extended-release injectable naltrexone may limit access for patients who lack health insurance or other financial resources. The use of VIVITROL should be part of a comprehensive management program that includes psychosocial support.

#### **Is injectable naltrexone covered by NC Medicaid?**

YES - Vivitrol is covered by NC DMA in physician's drug program via J code **J2315** in 1mg increments. Effective November 1, 2016, Vivitrol will be on the DMA outpatient pharmacy preferred drug list.

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**Thank you for your support in serving our Medicaid and Health Choice communities!**