



Recently Introduced Products

Drug Name	Indication	Potential Impact	Expected Avg. Annual Cost
Metrogel 1% Topical Gel	For the treatment of inflammatory papules, pustules, and erythema of rosacea	\$	\$219
Clobex Topical Spray	For the treatment of moderate to severe plaque psoriasis	\$	\$788.40

\$: Est. drug plan expenditure increase of <1%* \$\$: Est. drug plan expenditure increase of 1-5%* \$\$\$: Est. drug plan expenditure increase of >5%*

Suboxone™ - A New Substitution Maintenance Therapy for Opioid Drug Dependence

Suboxone™ is a sublingual (dissolves under the tongue) tablet combination of two drugs – buprenorphine and naloxone (2mg/0.5mg or 8mg/2mg)- for the substitution treatment of opioid drug dependence.¹

Opioid dependency is a chronic relapsing-remitting condition. Historically, the predominant cause of opioid dependence was the illicit use of heroin. However, the current reality is that illegal opioid use largely includes legally available prescription opioids such as oxycodone, codeine, morphine, and hydromorphone, as reported in a Canadian study of opioid dependent individuals from a Toronto methadone maintenance program.² Opioid dependence involves not only illicit drug use but also dysfunctional behaviour that interferes with normal daily functioning, significant health consequences especially among injection drug users, an increase in prevalence and incidence of morbid conditions (hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and HIV), and significant social consequences.³

Currently, the only other drug available for opioid dependence management is methadone. Methadone is dissolved in drink crystals and taken orally to avoid diversion and injecting. Although methadone is effective in substitution therapy, closer monitoring of the patient is needed due to strong withdrawal symptoms; increased mortality due to overdose; potential cardiac risks and respiratory depression, and a longer detoxification process. In addition, patients taking methadone have the risk, over time, of becoming addicted to methadone itself.

Suboxone™, in comparison, is as effective as methadone in suppressing opioid cravings but the active ingredient, buprenorphine, has a better safety profile (in regard to the above-mentioned risks). With Suboxone™, no “euphoria-like” effect is experienced at higher doses thus reducing the addictive properties of Suboxone™. The other advantage that Suboxone™ has over methadone is that it has a longer duration of action which will allow for maintenance dosing every 2-3 days while methadone requires daily dosing. The annual cost of substitution therapy with Suboxone™ is approximately \$1608. Suboxone™ will be fully covered under ALL ClaimSecure drug plans, including ClaimSecure Managed Formularies.

If you require additional information about Suboxone™, please contact Shellina Sevany, Manager, Clinical Services Department, at (905) 949-3025 or 1-888-479-7587 ext.3025.

Recommendation: Full Coverage

ClaimSecure reserves the right to amend in part or in its entirety stated special authorization clinical guidelines

References:

- 1) Suboxone™ Product Monograph. Schering-Plough Canada, May 17, 2007.
- 2) Fischer B *et al.* Illicit opioid use and its key characteristics: A select overview and evidence from a Canadian multisite cohort of illicit opioid users (OPICAN). *Can J Psychiatry* 2006a;51:624-634.
- 3) Suboxone™ Private Payer Submission Binder. Schering-Plough Canada, January, 2008.

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* Based on the Financial Impact Analysis per 100 000 lives covered
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