

**From:** Canzolino, Joseph (PBM)  
**Sent:** Monday, October 01, 2012 6:53 AM  
**To:** VHAPBH MAP Committee; VHAPBH VISN Pharmacist Executives  
**Cc:** VHAPBH Pharmacy Chiefs; VHAPBH Pharmacy Purchasers  
**Subject:** BUPRENORPHINE/NALOXONE Discontinuation: Message to Field

**Please disseminate this Message to whomever may need the information**

To All,

VA PHARMACY BENEFITS MANAGEMENT MESSAGE REGARDING THE MANUFACTURER'S  
DISCONTINUATION OF BUPRENORPHINE/NALOXONE (SUBOXONE) SUBLINGUAL TABLETS

On September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012, Reckitt-Benckiser announced to health care providers that it had notified the U.S. Food and Drug Administration on September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012 that they would be voluntarily discontinuing the distribution of buprenorphine/naloxone (SUBOXONE) sublingual tablets (2 mg / 0.5 mg and 8 mg / 2 mg strengths) within the next 6 months. The buprenorphine/naloxone (SUBOXONE) film formulation will remain in production. The manufacturer cited an industry sponsored review of U.S. Poison Control Center data showing a higher rate of accidental pediatric exposures with the tablet than the film formulation; this information has not been published, nor has the FDA issued any statements regarding this issue (as of 9/27/2012).

The VA PBM realizes the urgency of needing to transition patients on the tablet to the film to prevent lapses in therapy before the tablets are no longer available. In the second and third weeks of October, the VISN Pharmacist Executive Committee and Medical Advisory Panel of VA PBM will be deciding formulary management strategies to address the discontinuation of the tablets. At this time, buprenorphine/naloxone tablets are on the VA National Formulary with criteria for use and there are no shortages. The film is available through the nonformulary request process without national criteria for use.

RECOMMENDATION: For now, VA PBM recommends that providers continue to prescribe the tablets in a 'business-as-usual' manner until advised otherwise. PBM will issue additional guidance in the near future.

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