

Changes to Pharmacare benefit coverage for COX-2 Inhibitors

Effective September 1, 2004

- Effective September 1, 2004, Pharmacare will implement a change in the benefit status for the class of COX-2 drugs (Celebrex, Mobicox and Vioxx generic meloxicam), from Part 2 to Part 3.
- COX-2 Inhibitors will be required to meet established EDS criteria for the treatment of osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis.

To be eligible for **Pharmacare benefit** coverage, COX-2s will require Exception Drug Status (EDS) Part 3 approval. Benefit coverage for Celebrex, Mobicox, Vioxx, Bextra and generic meloxicam will require Pharmacare approval at the time the prescription is written by the physician.

This change will help target coverage of these drugs to those patients who meet the medical criteria established by an expert committee of physicians and pharmacists. In so doing, Manitoba Pharmacare will provide benefit coverage similar to that available in most other provincial and territorial drug plans in the listing of these products.

Should the benefit coverage not be approved, and the patient wishes to purchase an alternate medication that is a Pharmacare benefit, the patient should discuss their medication needs with his/her physician and/or pharmacist. Patients also have the option to continue taking the COX-2 prescribed by the physician and personally paying for the total cost of the drug.

Please be aware that some private and extended health insurance providers require their clients to have Part 3 EDS approval before they agree to cover any of the prescription cost. The patient should contact their private drug plan directly for further information.

The patient and physician will be advised when the EDS approval should be renewed for patients that have been granted EDS coverage for long-term treatment with COX-2 medications.

Prescription drugs are an integral part of delivering effective health care and providing a high quality of life for Manitobans. The province's Pharmacare program ensures Manitobans can afford this important health care service.

EDS CRITERIA COVERAGE FOR COX-2 INHIBITORS

For the long-term treatment of osteoarthritis or rheumatoid arthritis in patients who have one or more of the following risk factors:

- a) Previous peptic ulcer, gastrointestinal bleeding, gastric outlet obstruction (endoscopy or radiographic evidence);
- b) Elderly (more than 65 years of age);
- c) Concurrent warfarin therapy;
- d) Bleeding disorders; and
- e) Concurrent prednisone therapy at doses greater than 5 mg per day for more than two weeks.

OR

- Where at least 3 NSAID's have been tried and failed or were not tolerated.

NOTE: For treatment of osteoarthritis, patients must have completed an adequate trial of acetaminophen.