



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
MEDICAL QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMISSION
PO Box 47866, Olympia, WA 98504-7866

June 15, 2011

Dear Colleague:

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information regarding the recently adopted rules for the management of chronic noncancer pain.

In Substitute House Bill 2876, signed into law in March 2010, the legislature required the Medical Quality Assurance Commission, as well as four other boards and commissions, to adopt rules governing chronic noncancer pain management.

The Medical Commission adopted rules that meet the legislative deadline of June 30, 2011. The rule will be effective January 2, 2012. This provides a ***six-month implementation period*** during which physicians and physician assistants can learn about the rules, make any adjustments necessary in their practice and obtain any continuing education needed.

It is important for you to understand that these rules were modeled after the current Medical Commission Pain Management Guidelines that have been in place since 1996, and the Federation of State Medical Boards model pain management policy.

The Medical Commission is developing an educational package to include CME that will be available on our website by June 30, 2011.

The Medical Commission is also creating an interpretive statement. The goal of the interpretive statement will be to provide guidance regarding how the commission will apply the rules, and to alleviate potential physician, physician assistant and patient concerns about the rules. It is important to note that *the commission recognizes that patients in Washington need access to appropriate and effective pain relief. The commission does not want to negatively affect that access.* It is the commission's goal that the pain management rules provide clarity to an area of previous uncertainty, and in so doing encourage better pain management.

You can find the text of the rules adopted by the Medical Commission linked to our website: <http://1.usa.gov/MQACpainrules>. If you have questions regarding the rules, you can ask them at Medical.PainRules@doh.wa.gov. Previously answered questions can be found on our website at www.doh.wa.gov/hsqa/mqac/painmanagement.

Sincerely,


Leslie M. Burger, MD, FACP, Chair

Medical Quality Assurance Commission

