

West's Georgia Administrative Code

Title 360. Georgia Composite Medical Board

Chapter 360-3. Investigations and Discipline

→→ 360-3-.06. Pain Management

(1) Definitions. As used in this rule, the following terms shall mean:

(a) “Annual patient population” shall mean those patients seen by a clinic or practice in a twelve month calendar year, but shall not include patients that are in-patient in hospital, nursing home or hospice facilities licensed pursuant to O.C.G.A. T. 31, Ch. 7.

(b) “Board” shall mean the Georgia Composite Medical Board.

(c) “Chronic pain” shall mean pain requiring treatment which has persisted for a period of ninety days or greater in a year, but shall not include perioperative pain, i.e., pain immediately preceding and immediately following a surgical procedure, when such perioperative pain is being treated by a physician in connection with a surgical procedure.

(d) “Monitoring” means any method to assure treatment compliance including but not limited to the use of pill counts, pharmacy or prescription program verification. Monitoring must include a urine, saliva, sweat, or serum test performed on a random basis.

(e) “Terminal condition” means an incurable or irreversible condition, which would result in death in a relatively short period of time.

(2) O.C.G.A. § 43-34-8 authorizes the Board to take disciplinary action against licensees for unprofessional conduct, which includes conduct below the minimum standards of practice. With respect to the prescribing of controlled substances for the **treatment of pain** and chronic pain, the Board has determined that the minimum standards of practice include, but are not limited to the following:

(a) Physicians cannot delegate the dispensing of controlled substances to an unlicensed person.

(b) When prescribing controlled substances, a physician shall use a prescription pad that complies with state law.

(c) When initially prescribing a controlled substance for the **treatment of pain** or chronic pain, a physician shall have a medical history of the patient, a physical examination of the patient shall have been conducted, and informed consent shall have been obtained. In the event of a documented emergency, a physician may prescribe an amount of medication to cover a period of not more than 72 hours without a physical examination.

(d) When a physician is treating a patient with controlled substances for pain or chronic pain for a condition that is not terminal, the physician shall obtain or make a diligent effort to obtain any prior diagnostic records relative to the condition for which the controlled substances are being prescribed and shall obtain or make a diligent effort to obtain any prior pain treatment records. The records obtained from prior treating physicians shall be maintained by the prescribing physician with the physician's medical records for a period of at least ten (10) years. If the physician has made a diligent effort and is unable to obtain prior diagnostic records, then the physician must order appropriate tests to document the condition requiring **treatment for pain** or chronic pain. If the physician has made a diligent effort and the prior pain treatment records are not available, then the physician must document the efforts made to obtain the records and shall maintain the documentation of the efforts in his/her patient record.

(e) When a physician determines that a patient for whom he is prescribing controlled scheduled substances is abusing the medication, then the physician shall make an appropriate referral for treatment for substance abuse.

(f) When prescribing a Schedule II or III controlled substance for 90 (ninety) consecutive days or greater for the treatment of chronic

pain arising from conditions that are not terminal or patients who are not in a nursing home or hospice, a physician must have a written treatment agreement with the patient and shall require the patient to have a clinical visit at least once every three (3) months, while treating for pain, to evaluate the patient's response to treatment, compliance with the therapeutic regimen and any new condition that may have developed and be masked by the use of Schedule II or III controlled substances. The requirement of a visit at a minimum of once every three months can be waived and the clinical visit be at least once per year if the doctor determines there is a substantial hardship and documents such hardship in the patient's record or if the morphine equivalent daily dose ("MEDD") is 30 mg. or less.

(g) When prescribing a Schedule II or III controlled substance for 90 (ninety) consecutive days or greater for the treatment of chronic pain arising from conditions that are not terminal or patients in a nursing home or hospice, a physician must monitor compliance with the therapeutic regimen. This means that body fluid analysis (drug screens) must be performed at least four times a year on a random basis or done at the same frequency proportionate to the period of treatment. Exceptions to the requirement of a clinical visit once every three (3) months may be made for hardship in certain cases and such hardship must be well documented in the patient record. The exception to this monitoring is when the morphine equivalent daily dose (MEDD) is 30 mg or less. In that case fluid monitoring shall be performed at least once per year.

(h) The physician shall respond to any abnormal result of any monitoring and such response shall be recorded in the patient's record.

(i) When a physician determines that a new medical condition exists that is beyond their scope of training, he/she shall make a referral to the appropriate practitioner.

(g) [FN1] Any physician who prescribes Schedule II or III substances for chronic pain for greater than 50% of that physician's annual patient population must document competence to the Board through certification or eligibility for certification in **pain management** or palliative medicine as approved by the Georgia Composite Medical Board ("Board"). The Board recognizes certifications in pain medicine or palliative medicine by the American Board of Medical Specialties or the American Osteopathic Association, the American Board of Pain Medicine and the American Board of Interventional Pain Physicians. If the physician does not hold this certification or eligibility he/she must demonstrate competence by biennially obtaining 20 (twenty) hours of continuing medical education ("CME") pertaining to **pain management** or palliative medicine. Such CME must be an AMA/AOA PRA Category I CME, a board approved CME program, or any federally approved CME. The CME obtained pursuant to this rule may count towards the CME required for license renewal.