



Dear Patients:

I am writing to explain BCHC's policy on prescribing drugs for pain.

We work hard to provide you with high quality medical care. That means we study current research on the best treatments for health problems. We use that knowledge to create your care plan.

Recent research shows that using narcotics for chronic (long-term) pain causes many problems. It often results in drug addiction and abuse. It has resulted in thousands of overdose deaths. As we unfortunately see here in Berks County, prescription drugs can end up in our schools, in the hands of our children and teens. The bottom line is, narcotics are not the best treatment for most chronic pain.

It is our goal to create a care plan for chronic pain that does not include narcotics.

Because we care about your health, we will continue to evaluate and treat pain. We will continue to refer patients to pain management specialists, and to refer to other providers and treatments who can help with pain relief and management. But we are updating our policy on narcotic prescriptions, effective November 10, 2015. This is the policy all of our providers must follow:

Controlled Substance (Narcotics) Policy for Chronic Pain Patients

Comfort Care:

Patients may be prescribed narcotic medication/controlled substances for palliative comfort care.

For patients who are terminally ill, who are in hospice care, or who have a cancer diagnosis, our providers are allowed to prescribe narcotics for what is called "palliative" or comfort care. This is only to manage end-of-life and cancer-related pain. We will prescribe all appropriate medications to achieve patient comfort in these cases.

New Patient Care:

No patient will be given a prescription for narcotic medication or a controlled substance on the first visit.

- a. Our providers will not consider prescribing a controlled substance/narcotic for chronic pain without having seen a patient's pharmacy records and past medical records.
- b. Each patient will be objectively evaluated, and our goal is to create a care plan that does not involve controlled substances.
- c. If the patient does not need palliative comfort care, the patient will likely be referred to a pain management practice or other appropriate specialist in order to determine the need for a controlled substance prescription.

Established Patient Care:

It is the goal of every provider at BCHC to safely transition our patients away from narcotics like Percocet, oxycodone, Vicoden, hydrocodone, and similar drugs.



An existing patient (as of November 10, 2015) who has a controlled substance prescription for chronic pain may continue to receive this medication. However there will be strict guidelines and mandatory monitoring. This includes:

- a. There will be strict limits on the number of pills prescribed by the provider.
- b. There will be strict limits on the maximum dose prescribed by the provider.
- c. There will be no refills prescribed before they are due.
- d. Lost prescriptions will not be replaced.
- e. Existing prescriptions may be tapered by the provider to the maximum dose recommended by the Pennsylvania Medical Society. That means the dose will be reduced in a controlled way over time.
- f. Any patient who has a prescription for a narcotic pain medication must sign a pain management agreement and agree to and follow all BCHC's rules for regular urine drug screening.
- g. If there is any evidence the medication is not being used properly, the provider will not refill the prescription.
- h. Behavior must always be appropriate. We know change is difficult. But we are determined to provide the best care for you, and for the community we serve. If a patient curses, threatens, yells at, or is otherwise rude or abusive to any member of the BCHC staff we may discharge the patient from our practice.
- i. We have referral relationships with a number of excellent pain specialists. Patients with very complicated pain history may be referred to one of these specialists.

Important Rules for Controlled Substance Prescriptions:

- a. **ONLY DURING REGULAR OFFICE HOURS:** Controlled substance prescriptions will **ONLY** be refilled during regular health center hours.
- b. **NO AFTER-HOURS PRESCRIPTIONS:** Controlled substance prescriptions will **NEVER** be refilled after hours or on weekends.
- c. **YOU MUST WAIT FOR A PHONE CALL:** You will be notified by phone when the prescription is ready to be picked up.
- d. **NO EXCEPTIONS:** If you did not get a phone call, and you walk in and ask for your prescription, you **WILL NOT** receive it. You will have to use the phone at the front desk and leave a message.
- e. **BEHAVIOR** must be calm and appropriate at all times.

It is our goal to work with you calmly and cooperatively to make sure you continue to receive exceptional care.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Mary E. Kelleher". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and legible.

Mary E. Kelleher, MD
Chief Medical Officer