

## **Naltrexone as a treatment for relapse prevention in drug misusers - NICE Appraisal**

### **Assessment Report (systematic review and economic evaluation)**

#### **Comments from The Royal College of Psychiatrists, 12.4.06**

As the title specifies this appraisal only considers oral naltrexone for opiate dependence but does note that depot preparations should be available in the near future.

The report does not look at a possible advantage of earlier transfer to naltrexone from buprenorphine than from heroin or, in particular, methadone.

Pg 94 contrasts uptake of treatment with methadone and buprenorphine to the uptake with naltrexone but does not distinguish between the former being maintenance and the latter abstinence; indeed it goes on to look at the former being an alternative to naltrexone, which it patently is not, this should be re-written or removed. The title is specific in stating this appraisal is looking at 'formerly opioid dependent drug users, those on methadone or buprenorphine are dependent'.

Pg 95 notes poor quality of research available but makes no comment on the need for further more rigorous research.

It notes throughout document the low numbers in treatment with naltrexone in the UK but does not explore reasons for this. It then makes assumptions that it therefore is not necessary to consider expansion of naltrexone treatment. It does not consider, particularly in cost or QALY evaluation, the reasons for low level of provision, eg lack of capacity for secondary services to provide relapse prevention, refusal of PCTs to fund ongoing prescribing in primary care etc? This suggested lack of expansion need is concerning, as the available paucity of research does not confirm this statement.

Apart from the above the document has thoroughly explored the available evidence and notes the potential in professional groups. It also looks at whether there may be particular patient populations beyond professional groups that may be particularly suitable but not sure, beyond the opinion of the authors, how that recommendation is achieved.

The Royal College of Psychiatrists

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