



BC Palliative Care Benefits Program

Physician Guide

April 1, 2005

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1. Introduction

Since February 1, 2001, BC residents who wish to receive palliative care services at home can receive assistance from the provincial government with the cost of palliative medications, medical supplies and medical equipment.

Until now, the BC Palliative Care Benefits Program has been funded and administered by the Ministry of Health Services' Home and Community Care Division. Payment for the drugs dispensed to eligible patients under the drug program portion was facilitated by PharmaCare through PharmaNet. Local health authorities administered the portion of the program dealing with medical supplies and equipment.

On April 1, 2005:

- PharmaCare will fully fund and administer the drug program portion as the BC Palliative Care Drug Program (or "Plan P").
- Local health authorities will retain full responsibility for the medical supply and equipment portion of the program.

2. Eligibility

The BC Palliative Care Benefits Program was developed to support individuals of any age who have reached the end stage of a life-threatening disease or illness.

The individual's physician makes the determination as to a patient's medical eligibility for palliative care benefits.

All BC residents who are enrolled in the Medical Services Plan who meet the following criteria are eligible. Persons who:

- are living at home¹
- have been diagnosed with a life-threatening illness or condition
- have a life expectancy of up to six months, and
- consent to the focus of care being palliative rather than treatment aimed at cure.

For guidance in making the determination of a patient's medical eligibility, please refer to Appendix A - Palliative Performance Scale (PPS).

Please note that individuals covered by the Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) Program of Health Canada or Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) will require coverage under the program only if a medication is not covered by NIHB or VAC.

Members of the Canadian Forces and RCMP receive coverage through their employers and are, therefore, not eligible for this program.

2.1 Program Benefits

The BC Palliative Care Benefits Program has two components:

- BC Palliative Care Drug Program (Plan P) through PharmaCare
- Palliative Medical Supplies and Equipment Program through the local health authority.

¹ "Home" is defined as wherever the person is living, whether in their own home or living with family or friends, or living in a supportive living residence or hospice that is not covered under PharmaCare Plan B.

2.1.1 Palliative Care Drug Program

This program provides 100% coverage of the eligible costs² of the prescription drugs and selected over-the-counter (OTC) drugs needed for care and treatment at home.

Medications covered by the program include:

- prescription medications prescribed for pain, symptom control and improved quality of life; and,
- selected over-the-counter (OTC) drugs required to supplement the prescription drugs and considered to be medically necessary adjuncts for quality palliative care.

Eligible medications available under the BC Palliative Care Drug Program as of April 1, 2005, are listed in Appendix C - BC Palliative Care Drug Program Formulary.

The program does not cover medications not listed in the program formulary, such as vitamins, herbs, nutritional supplements or medical marijuana.

To receive coverage of the OTC drugs in the Plan P formulary, the physician must write a prescription for the medication. This allows the pharmacy to enter the medication in PharmaCare's computer system, PharmaNet, which enables PharmaCare to cover the eligible costs.

Note: Needles and syringes for administration of injectible medications are provided by the health authorities as medical supplies and equipment benefits.

Payment of Drug Cost

When a prescription for an individual who has been registered for Plan P is processed at the patient's pharmacy, the pharmacy enters a claim for the prescription(s) on PharmaNet. PharmaCare will then pay the pharmacy directly for:

- the actual acquisition cost of the medication (up to a maximum of 7% above the manufacturer's wholesale price), and
- a dispensing fee (up to the maximum fee recognized by PharmaCare).

If the prescription is for an over-the-counter drug, PharmaCare will pay the pharmacy directly for the:

- actual acquisition cost plus the PharmaCare maximum allowable dispensing fee.

2.1.2 Medical Supplies and Equipment Benefits

This component is designed to ease the financial barrier to palliative patients for the cost of medical supplies and equipment needed for care at home. The Ministry of Health Services funds health authorities to deliver this component of the BC Palliative Care Benefits Program.

² Some community pharmacies charge drug cost and dispensing fees over and above the amount the BC Palliative Care Drug Program will cover.

3. Submitting an Application

3.1 Overview

Once a physician has certified that a patient meets the medical criteria, the physician completes a *BC Palliative Care Benefits Program Application* and faxes it to Health Insurance BC (for drug coverage) and to the health authority (for coverage of medical supplies and equipment).

Note: Health Insurance BC (HIBC) began delivering both Medical Services Plan (MSP) and PharmaCare services as of April 1, 2005. The Ministry of Health Services retains responsibility for decisions regarding program policy and benefits. HIBC is now responsible for all operational aspects of the MSP and PharmaCare programs.

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act requires that the patient or the patient's legal representative consent to the release of personal information such as basic demographic data and diagnosis. For this reason, the patient or their legal representative must sign the application.

To ensure prompt processing, please complete all sections of the application form. Incomplete information will require HIBC and/or the health authority to return the form to the physician to obtain the missing information.

Please fax the application form to:

- Health Insurance BC (HIBC) at **250-405-3587**, and
- the Home and Community Care office of the local health authority, as listed in the blue pages of your telephone directory.

3.2 Ordering Application Forms

To obtain blank application forms (Form # HLTH349), please send a request to the Ministry of Health Services Warehouse by:

- fax to **250-952-4559**, or
- e-mail to **james.mcgarry@gov.bc.ca**

For your convenience, the application form, this guide and a patient information sheet are also available on the [PharmaCare Web site](#). From the **Contents** menu on the PharmaCare home page, select **Site Map**, then click on **Downloads Available**.

3.3 Enrollment in the BC Palliative Care Drug Program

Coverage for benefits under the BC Palliative Care Drug Program begins as soon as Health Insurance BC (delivering operational services for PharmaCare) has processed the application and entered the information in the PharmaNet computer system. Please allow 12 hours for processing.

To confirm enrollment in the BC Palliative Care Drug Program, the individual, physician or pharmacist may contact Health Insurance BC (HIBC). The public can contact HIBC at:

- 604-683-7151 (Vancouver)
- 1-800-663-7100 (Rest of BC)

Once the application is processed, prescriptions can be filled at any pharmacy in British Columbia.

Benefits under the BC Palliative Care Drug Program continue for as long as the person is diagnosed as requiring palliative care.

3.3.1 BC Palliative Care Drug Program Formulary

The Drug Formulary defines which prescription medications and over-the-counter (OTC) medications are available.

The purpose of the drug program is to support better symptom and pain management for home-based palliative patients. The drugs available support and enable palliative patients to remain at home.

Medications are selected for inclusion in the BC Palliative Care Drug Program Formulary based on the following criteria:

- the prescription medication or OTC drug is prescribed for pain and symptom control; and,
- the prescription medication or OTC drug is prescribed to improve quality of life for palliative patients; and,
- provision of this drug to palliative patients supports and enables palliative patients to remain at home.

Drugs not included in the Palliative Care Drug Program Formulary may be covered under the patient's usual PharmaCare plan (e.g., Fair PharmaCare or Plan C).

Requests for an addition to the formulary can be faxed or mailed to Administrative Services for the BC Palliative Care Drug Program, PharmaCare Pharmaceutical Services, Ministry of Health Services, 1515 Blanshard Street, Victoria V8W 3C8, Fax: From Victoria 250-952-2116 or, from elsewhere in the BC, toll-free at 1-800-609-4884.

3.4 Enrollment for Medical Supplies and Equipment Benefits

Medical supplies and equipment benefits include coverage for necessary medical supplies and equipment needed to provide safe and quality palliative care at home. Health authorities are required to provide these medical supplies and equipment at no charge to eligible palliative patients.

Mechanisms by which equipment is provided can range from health authority arrangements with medical supply companies for lease or rental of equipment, arrangements with existing organizations such as Red Cross Loan cupboards, or actual purchase of technology such as CAD pumps by a Community Health Services Society with a contract for repair and maintenance with the Community Health Council.

A list of medical supplies and equipment provided by the health authorities is included in Appendix B - Medical Supplies & Equipment.

Once the health authority has received the application, health authority staff will contact the patient or family. Arrangements will be made for a home visit to determine which medical supplies and equipment are needed. Once the patient's needs are known, health authority staff will make arrangements for the provision of the needed supplies and equipment.

4. Palliative Care Resources

4.1 Palliative Care Consultation Line

Physicians have access to a toll-free phone line for palliative care consultation. The phone line is staffed by palliative care physicians who offer immediate clinical advice and provide direction on palliative care resources in the patient's own community.

This after-hours and weekend service is available throughout BC for physicians requiring expert advice on symptom and pain management. Other health care professionals may also call for consultation. For palliative care consultation, call **1-877-711-5757**.

4.2 Additional Information

4.2.1 General Information for Patients and Caregivers

Patients or caregivers can consult the following for general information on the program:

- Ministry of Health Service Health InfoLine at (250) 952-1742 or toll-free at 1-800-465-4911.
- Ministry of Health Services, PharmaCare Web site at www.healthservices.gov.bc.ca/pharme, for information about drug coverage and basic eligibility requirements.
- Health Insurance BC (HIBC) at 1-800-663-7100 or, from Vancouver at 604-683-7151, for information on medications included in the formulary.
- Local health authority, for information on medical equipment and supplies.

4.2.2 Information for Physicians

Status of a Patient's Application and Information on the Formulary

- For information on patient eligibility, on whether or not a patient's application has been processed, or on the medications included in the formulary, physicians can contact Health Insurance BC (HIBC) at the usual physician telephone numbers.

Program Administration

For information on drug eligibility, additions to the formulary, etc., write or fax:

Administrative Services for the BC Palliative Care Drug Program
PharmaCare Pharmaceutical Services
Ministry of Health Services
1515 Blanshard Street
Victoria BC V8W 3C8

Fax: From Victoria 250-952-2116 or, from elsewhere in the BC, toll-free 1-800-609-4884.

Special Authorities

Most drugs in the Plan P formulary are regular PharmaCare benefits and drugs not included in the Plan P formulary may be covered under another PharmaCare plan (e.g., Fair PharmaCare). However, if a drug that is not included in the formulary is needed to alleviate patient discomfort—and there is no substitute for that drug in the formulary—PharmaCare will consider a request for Special Authority Plan P coverage.

To request Plan P coverage of a medication not included in the formulary:

- The quickest method is to submit a Special Authority Request Form to the usual Special Authority Program fax number, rather than making the request by phone.
- The form should be clearly marked “For Palliative Care Registrant” to ensure it receives first priority adjudication.
- Please include adequate documentation with the request. Adjudication may be delayed if PharmaCare needs to call the physician and/or consultant for additional information.

Medical Supplies and Equipment

For contact information regarding the medical supplies and equipment available through the local health authority, please refer to Appendix D - Health Authority Contacts.

Appendix A - Palliative Performance Scale (PPS)

PPS Level	Ambulation	Activity & Evidence of Disease	Self-Care	Intake	Conscious Level
100%	Full	Normal activity. No evidence of disease.	Full	Normal	Full
90%	Full	Normal activity. Some evidence of disease.	Full	Normal	Full
80%	Full	Normal activity <i>with</i> effort. Some evidence of disease.	Full	Normal or Reduced	Full
70%	Reduced	Unable normal job/work Some evidence of disease.	Full	Normal or Reduced	Full
60%	Reduced	Unable hobby/house work. Significant disease.	Occasional assistance necessary	Normal or Reduced	Full or Confusion
50%	Mainly sit/lie	Unable to do any work. Extensive disease.	Considerable assistance required	Normal or Reduced	Full or Confusion
40%	Mainly in bed	As above.	Mainly assistance	Normal or Reduced	Full or Drowsy or Confusion
30%	Totally in bed	As above.	Total care	Reduced	Full or Drowsy or Confusion
20%	As above	As above.	Total care	Minimal sips	Full or Drowsy or Confusion
10%	As above.	As above.	Total care	Mouth care only	Drowsy or confusion
0%	Death	-	-	-	-

Reference Publications: (1) Anderson F, Downing GM, Hill J, Casorso L, Leach N, Palliative Performance Scale (PPS): A new tool. *Journal of Palliative Care* 12(1): 5-11, 1996.

(2) Palliative Performance Scale (PPS), Table 1.5, page 21. Downing (Ed) et al. *Medical Care of the Dying*, 3rd Edition, 1998.

To qualify for the BC Palliative Care Benefits Program, patients will usually be at PPS 50% or below.

Appendix B - Medical Supplies & Equipment

Health authority staff determine the patient's needs for supplies and equipment and make arrangements for the provision of needed supplies and equipment.

Medical Supplies

Health authorities are required to provide medical supplies to eligible palliative care patients at no charge to the patient.

Supplies to be provided to eligible patients include:

Routine dressing supplies

- sterile dressing supplies
- bandages, including elastic and adhesive, and tape
- trays (disposable or re-usable)
- solutions and ointments (not covered by the BC Palliative Care Drug Program)
- medication administration supplies
- needles, syringes, swabs.

Intravenous therapy supplies

- hydration solutions: Normal saline, 2/3 & 1/3, D5W
- mini-bags, tubing, cathlons, syringes, needles, heparin locks and caps

Urinary catheter care supplies

- urinary catheter equipment including drainage tubing, drainage bags, connectors, leg bag drainage set
- catheterization tray
- disposable gloves (non-sterile).

Incontinence supplies

- incontinence briefs and pads
 - condom drainage sets
 - disposable gloves (non-sterile)
-

Items **not** covered by the health authority

- ongoing diabetic supplies (covered by PharmaCare, except Blood Glucose Monitoring Strips which are covered by the local health authority)
- ostomy supplies (covered by PharmaCare)
- wound care ointments requiring a prescription (please refer to the BC Palliative Care Drug Program formulary for these prescription items)

Equipment

Health authorities are required to establish mechanisms whereby appropriate equipment is made available to eligible palliative patients at no charge to the patient.

Equipment includes:

- hypodermoclysis equipment
 - computerized ambulatory drug delivery (CADD) pump equipment, including cassettes and other approved pain control delivery technologies
 - alternating/oscillating mattresses, bed cradles
 - mechanical lift
 - commodes, transfer boards, bath seats, bath poles, wheelchair shower chair
 - urinals, bed pans, kidney basins
 - walkers, canes, crutches, standard wheelchairs
 - hospital beds (where necessary)
-

Appendix C - BC Palliative Care Drug Program Formulary

Not all product formulations and strengths of the medications listed below are necessarily eligible for coverage. Formulary is current as of April 1, 2005.

Analgesics

Non-Opioid

- Acetaminophen

NSAIDs

- Diclofenac
- Naproxen
- Ibuprofen
- Celecoxib, rofecoxib, meloxicam
- This category excludes topical NSAIDs

Opioids

- Codeine products including acetaminophen combinations
- Fentanyl
- Hydromorphone
- Methadone
- Morphine
- Oxycodone
- Sufentanil
- This category excludes Demerol, Pentazocine, Butorphanol, Anileridine

Misc Analgesics

- Mexiletine
- Ketamine

Anticoagulants

- Warfarin

Coagulants –antifibrinolytic agents

- Tranexamic acid
 - Epsilon aminocaproic acid
-

Anticonvulsants

- Carbamazepine
- Gabapentin
- Phenytoin
- Phenobarbital
- Valproic acid

Antidepressants

- Amitriptyline
- Desipramine
- Doxepin
- Imipramine
- Nortriptyline
- Fluoxetine
- Fluvoxamine
- Paroxetine
- Sertraline
- Citalopram
- Venlafaxine
- Bupropion
- Trazodone

AntiDiarrheals

- Bismuth subsalicylate
- Diphenoxylate
- Loperamide
- Octreotide—As a last resort only (e.g., currently covered for profuse diarrhea in advanced AIDS not responsive to multiple constipating agents).

Antiemetics

- Dimenhydrinate
 - Prochlorperazine—po, supp
 - Domperidone
 - Metoclopramide—po, parenteral
-

- Haloperidol
- Dexamethasone
- Promethazine
- Octreotide—As a last resort only (e.g., currently covered for uncontrolled vomiting from an irreversible bowel obstruction not responsive to the use of multiple antiemetics).

AntiFungal (oral/vaginal preparations)

- Clotrimazole
- Fluconazole
- Nystatin
- Ketoconazole

AntiMicrobials

- All antimicrobials normally covered by PharmaCare

Antipruritics

- Hydroxyzine
- Diphenhydramine

Antipsychotics

- Chlorpromazine
- Haloperidol
- Loxapine
- Methotrimeprazine
- Risperidone
- Thioridazine

AntiSpasmodics

- Atropine
 - Baclofen
 - Benztropine
 - Dantrolene
 - Hyoscyamine (Levsin)
 - Scopolamine – parenteral, patch
 - Dicyclomine (Bentylol)
-

- Scopolamine (Buscopan)
- Opium and Belladonna supp
- Oxybutynin
- Phenazopyridine

Antitussives

- Codeine syrup
- Hydrocodone-phenyltoloxamine

Antivirals

- Acyclovir
- Famcyclovir

Anxiolytics/Hypnotics

- Alprazolam
- Clonazepam
- Diazepam – po, parenteral
- Lorazepam – po, sl, parenteral
- Midazolam
- Oxazepam

Bone Metabolism Regulators

- Pamidronate
- Clodronate
- Zoledronic acid—Covered if a cost effective usage. For example, if a patient is at home, has an estimated life span of more than 4 weeks, and hospital day care is not available or the patient would need transportation to get to a hospital. In such a case, the physician could administer zoledronic acid over 10-15 minutes via a butterfly needle in a peripheral vein.

CHF Therapy

- All **ACE inhibitors** that are normally PharmaCare benefits
 - All **Beta blockers** that are normally PharmaCare benefits
 - Carvedilol
 - All **antianginals** that are normally PharmaCare benefits
-

Bronchodilators

- Aminophylline tablets
- Salbutamol – inhalers and nebules
- Ipratropium bromide – inhalers and nebules

CNS Stimulants

- Methylphenidate

Diabetic Agents

- Insulin
- Glyburide
- Metformin

Diuretics

- Amiloride
- Ethacrynic acid
- Furosemide
- Hydrochlorothiazide
- Metolazone
- Spironolactone
- Triamterene

H2 Blockers and Proton Pump Inhibitors

- Ranitidine – the lowest cost alternative excluding cimetidine
- Pantoprazole
- Rabeprazole 10 mg tabs

Laxatives

- Bisacodyl
 - Cascara
 - Docusate sodium
 - Glycerin
 - Senna
 - Senna/Docusate combinations
 - Lactulose
-

- Magnesium citrate
- Magnesium hydroxide –MOM
- Fleet enema
- Microlax enema

Hemorrhoid Therapy – ointment and suppositories

- Framycetin
- Pramoxine with and without hydrocortizone
- Zinc sulfate with and without hydrocortizone
- Anusol, Anusol HC or equivalent preparations

Steroids

- Dexamethasone
- Prednisone
- All topical steroids normally covered by PharmaCare

Wound care

- Topical flagyl
- Flamazine ointment
- Fucidin ointment

Other

- Potassium chloride solution
-

Appendix D - Health Authority Contacts

Contacts as of September 2004.

Northern Health

Web site: www.northernhealth.ca

Contact the local public health unit, listed in the telephone directory, and ask for home and community care.

Interior Health

Website: www.interiorhealth.ca

Administration Offices

Phone: 250 862-4200

Fax: 250 862-4201

2180 Ethel Street

Kelowna BC V1Y 3A1

East Kootenay Service Area

Phone: 250 426-1650

Fax: 250 426-1577

1212 Second Street North

Cranbrook BC V1C 4T6

Okanagan Service Area

Phone: 250 770-3440

Fax: 250 770-3443

740 Carnie Avenue

Penticton BC V2A 8P9

Kootenay Boundary Service Area

Phone: 250 304-4211

Fax: 250 304-4223

1464 Columbia Avenue

Castlegar BC V1N 3K3

Thompson Cariboo Shuswap Service Area

Phone: 250 851-7374

Fax: 250 851-7375

519-B Columbia Street

Kamloops BC V2C 2T8

Vancouver Island Health Authority

Web site: www.viha.ca

Home and Community Care—General Enquiries Health Information Line

Phone: 250 388-2273

Toll-free: 1-888-533-2273

South Island Service Area—Victoria to Mill Bay, Southern Gulf Islands, west to Port Renfrew

Phone: 250 370-8699

Toll-free: 1-877-370-8699

Fax: 250 370-8750

1952 Bay Street

Victoria BC V8R 1J8

Central Island Service Area—Mill Bay to Bowser and west to Tofino

Phone: 250 740-6999

Toll-free: 1-888-791-1133

Fax: 250 390-7421

201-6551 Aulds Road

Nanaimo BC V9T 6K2

North Island Service Area—Bowser to Port Hardy and west to Tahsis

Phone: 250 830-6950

Fax: 250 830-6952

381 Second Avenue

Campbell River BC V9W 3V1

Fraser Health

Website: www.fraserhealth.ca

Phone: 604 587-4600

Fax: 604 587-4666

300-10334 152A Street

Surrey BC V3R 7P8

Vancouver Coastal Health

Website: www.vch.ca

Head Office

Phone: 604 875-5600

Toll-free: 1-866-884-0888

Fax: 604 875-4388

11th Floor 601 West Broadway

Vancouver BC V5Z 4C2

Vancouver Community Health Service Delivery Area

Phone: 604 736-2033

Fax: 604 731-3847

Suite 200-520 West 6th Avenue

Vancouver BC V5Z 4H5

Community Health Area 1 – City Centre

Three Bridges Community Health Center

Phone: 604 736-9844

Fax: 604 734-5918

1292 Hornby Street

Vancouver BC V6Z 1W2

Community Health Area 2 – Mid East

North Community Health Office

Phone: 604 253-3575

Fax: 604 253-2460

200-1651 Commercial Drive

Vancouver BC V5L 3Y3

Community Health Area 3 – North East

Evergreen Community Health Centre

Phone: 604 872-2511

Fax: 604 872-2368

3425 Crowley Drive

Vancouver BC V5R 6G3

Community Health Area 4 – West Side

Pacific Spirit Community Health Centre
Phone: 604 261-6366
Fax: 604 261-7220
2110 West 43rd Avenue
Vancouver BC V6M 2E1

Community Health Area 5 - Midtown

Raven Song Community Health Centre
Phone: 604 709-6400
Fax: 604 872-5102
200–2450 Ontario Street
Vancouver BC V5T 4T7

Community Health Area 6 – South Vancouver

South Community Health Office
Phone: 604 321-6151
Fax: 604 321-2947
6406 Knight Street
Vancouver BC V5P 2V9

Richmond Health Service Delivery Area

Richmond Community Home Support

Phone: 604 270-8105
Fax: 604 270-2463

Continuing Health Services

Phone: 604 278-3361
Fax: 604 278-4713
Richmond Health Services
Floor 5-North 7000 Westminster Highway
Richmond BC V6X 1A2

North Shore/Coast Garibaldi Health Service Delivery Area

North Shore

Phone: 604 983-6700
Fax: 604 983-6839
Fifth Floor 132 West Esplanade
North Vancouver BC V7M 1A2

Sunshine Coast

Phone: 604 741-0726
Fax: 604 741-0728
5630 Inlet Avenue
Sechelt BC V0N 3A0

Powell River

Phone: 604 485-8850
Fax: 604 485-7996
4313 Alberta Avenue
Powell River BC V8A 5G7

Sea to Sky – Squamish

Phone: 604 892-2293
Toll free: 1-877-892-2231
Fax: 604 892-2327
PO Box 220 1140 Hunter Place
Squamish BC V0N 3G0

Sea to Sky – Pemberton

Phone: 604 894-6939
Fax: 604 894-6491
Box 8 Portage Road
Pemberton BC V0N 2L0

Sea to Sky – Whistler

Phone: 604 932-3202
Fax: 604 932-6953
202-4380 Lorimer Road
Whistler BC V0N 1B4

Bella Bella and Bella Coola

Phone: 250 799-5345
Fax: 250 799-5635
Box 711
Bella Coola BC V0T 1C0
