



COLLEGE OF
NATUROPATHIC PHYSICIANS
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Re: Notice to Registrants – Tramadol

Prescription opioids, with the exception of tramadol, are excluded from the pharmacopoeia of naturopathic physicians in British Columbia by virtue of their classification as Schedule I drugs under the federal *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* (CDSA).

Following discussions between College staff and the Ministry of Health of BC, the Pharmacopoeia and Diagnostic Referral (“PDR”) Committee reviewed tramadol’s therapeutic uses and risks. The PDR Committee observed that tramadol is useful in naturopathic doctors' scopes of practice and that no adverse effects related to tramadol prescribed by a naturopathic doctor have been reported to the College. However, given the potential for abuse of, addiction to, or adverse reactions to any opioid, the PDR Committee recommended that the Board issue a notice to registrants regarding tramadol, including educational material concerning abuse, side effects and contraindications.

Tramadol Properties

The World Health Organization - Expert Committee on Drug Dependence issued an *Update Review Report on Tramadol* (the “Report”) in June 2014 which may be found at http://www.who.int/medicines/areas/quality_safety/6_1_Update.pdf?ua=1. The Report concluded that tramadol has a relatively low dependence potential and that dependence is associated with the use of tramadol over an extended period of time (more than a few weeks to months). The data also shows a higher risk profile in former

drug abusers and in medical staff personnel than in pain patients.

The Report listed adverse reactions of therapeutic use of tramadol to include nausea and dizziness (> 10%), drowsiness, fatigue, headache, increased sweating, vomiting, dry mouth, constipation (1-10%), diarrhea, and cardiovascular dysregulation (palpitations, tachycardia, postural hypotension - particularly after rapid intravenous administration) (0.1-1%). Respiratory depression, epileptiform convulsions, tremor, bradycardia, hallucinations, and anxiety are rare (0.01-0.1%).

Registrants who use tramadol in their practice may wish to review the Report in its entirety. Registrants are reminded that tramadol nonetheless has potential for abuse and they should be guided accordingly in their practice.