

Update on the Over Prescription of Opioid Drugs from the Arkansas Veterinary Medical Examining Board

What is your Board doing to address the over prescription of opioid drugs by its profession?

Veterinarians must report to the Arkansas Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (AR PDMP) when they dispense a controlled drug to a client for home use from their clinic pharmacy. Many veterinarians opt to write the prescription to be filled by the client at a human pharmacy, and in that case, do not report to the AR PDMP. At this time, the Board has received no data to suggest that Arkansas licensed veterinarians are over prescribing opioids to their patients, but we are willing to work closely with the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) and the staff that oversees the AR PDMP to make sure we address any potential issues in the overprescribing of opioids as it relates to veterinary medicine.

How is the Board monitoring members of its profession for possible abuse?

When the Board monitors a veterinarian or veterinary technician for possible drug abuse, it is typically because a complaint has been received. The complaint is handled through the Board's normal complaint process, and depending on the situation, either a consent agreement is issued, or a formal hearing is held. If necessary, we contact the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and work with their investigators on the case. The Board has had past consent agreements in place in which we've monitored veterinarians on a monthly basis by way of random drug testing and having them report periodically in-person to the Board.

Other situations in a veterinary clinic can occur, such as loss, theft or diversion of controlled drugs. When this happens, the veterinarian is required by regulation to immediately report that to the ADH Division of Pharmacy Services and submit the proper forms to the DEA. If needed, the Board will aid the DEA in situations involving the theft or diversion of controlled drugs by a veterinarian or veterinary technician.

How is the new legislation on prescribing report cards working?

The Board has not received any prescribing report cards from ADH. I reached out to them, and this is the information I was given via email:

"Per Act 820 of 2017, ADH Director will work with stakeholders to develop prescribing criteria that will help to inform determinations of misuse or abuse from information in the Prescriber Comparison Reports. Per the law, if after a year of Prescriber Comparison Reports, the information indicates misuse or abuse, ADH will alert the appropriate licensing board. To remain in-line with other activity in the state, ADH is waiting to set criteria until it can be matched to pending AR Medical Board rule changes on excessive prescribing."

What effort is your Board making in following up and monitoring the activities of the over prescribers?

Since ADH has not yet set the criteria for the Prescriber Comparison Reports, there have been no reports made from ADH to our Board to indicate that there are veterinarians who are over prescribing.

Has your Board implemented any education programs for your profession?

To date, we have not implemented any education programs for veterinarians re: the over prescription of opioid drugs; however, the Board will discuss how we can implement some requirements into our continuing education regulations to address the issue. We are aware that veterinary boards in other states have already done this, so we will research and reach out to those veterinary boards as we explore how to work this type of continuing education into our own regulations.