VENTURA COUNTY
HEALTH CARE PLAN

STEP THERAPY POLICY

POLICY: Antidepressants – Bupropion Long-Acting Step Therapy Policy

- Aplenzin® (bupropion hydrobromide extended-release tablets – Bausch Health)
- Auvelity™ (dextromethorphan hydrobromide and bupropion hydrochloride extended-release tablets – Axsome)
- Forfivo XL (bupropion hydrochloride extended-release tablets – Almatica)
- Wellbutrin SR® (bupropion hydrochloride sustained-release tablets – GlaxoSmithKline, generic)
- Wellbutrin XL® (bupropion hydrochloride extended-release tablets – Bausch Health, generic)

REVIEW DATE: 03/23/2022; selected revision 11/16/2022 and 11/30/2022

OVERVIEW

Aplenzin, Auvelity, Forfivo XL, bupropion hydrochloride (HCl) sustained-release (SR) tablets, and bupropion HCl extended-release (ER) tablets are indicated for the **treatment of depression**.[1-6] Bupropion HCl ER tablets and Aplenzin are also indicated for the prevention of seasonal major depressive episodes in patients with seasonal affective disorder.[3,4]

Aplenzin contains bupropion hydrobromide (HBr). Of note, 174 mg/day of bupropion HBr is equivalent to 150 mg/day of bupropion HCl.[4] Therefore, when switching patients from bupropion HCl SR or ER tablets to Aplenzin (or vice versa), it is possible to give equivalent daily doses. Aplenzin is bioequivalent to bupropion HCl ER tablets, which has been demonstrated to have similar bioavailability to both the immediate-release and the sustained-release formulations of bupropion. Forfivo XL is available as 450 mg extended-release tablets, while the other bupropion HCl ER tablets are available as 150 mg or 300 mg.[3,5]

Auvelity contains a combination of dextromethorphan HBr, an uncompetitive N-methyl D-aspartate (NMDA) receptor antagonist and sigma-1 receptor agonist, and bupropion HCl, an aminoketone and CYP450 2D6 inhibitor.[6] Each tablet contains 45 mg dextromethorphan HBr (equivalent to 32.98 mg dextromethorphan base) in an immediate-release formulation and 105 mg bupropion HCl (equivalent to 91.14 mg bupropion base) in an extended-release formulation.

Zyban® (bupropion HCl SR, generic) contains the same active ingredient as bupropion HCl SR and ER tablets and Forfivo XL; however, Zyban is indicated as an aid to smoking cessation treatment.[7] Because of the different indication for use, Zyban is not included in this policy.

Table 1. Available Long-Acting Bupropion-Containing Products.[1,3-6]

Brand / Generic name	Formulation	Strengths	Notes
Aplenzin® (bupropion HBr)	ER tablets	174, 348, 522 mg	Strengths are equivalent to 150, 300, and 450 mg of bupropion HCl, respectively.
Auvelity™ (dextromethorphan HBr and bupropion HCl)	ER tablets	45 mg/105 mg	Bupropion increases plasma levels of dextromethorphan by competitively inhibiting CYP2D6, which catalyzes a major biotransformation pathway for dextromethorphan.
Forfivo XL (bupropion HCl)	ER tablets	450 mg	Use another bupropion formulation for initial dose titration. Patients being treated with other bupropion products at 450 mg/day can be switched to equivalent dose of Forfivo XL once daily.

Table 1 (continued). Available Long-Acting Bupropion-Containing Products.[1,3-6]

Brand / Generic name	Formulation	Strengths	Notes
Wellbutrin SR® (bupropion HCl), generic	SR tablets	100, 150, 200 mg	Available generically.
Wellbutrin XL® (bupropion HCl), generic	ER tablets	150, 300 mg	Available generically.

HBr – Hydrobromide; HCl – Hydrochloride; ER – Extended-release; CYP – Cytochrome P450; SR – Sustained-release.

POLICY STATEMENT

This program has been developed to encourage the use of a Step 1 Product prior to the use of a Step 2 Product. If the Step Therapy rule is not met for a Step 2 Product at the point of service, coverage will be determined by the Step Therapy criteria below. All approvals are provided for 1 year in duration.

Automation: A patient with a history of one Step 1 Product within the 130-day look-back period is excluded from Step Therapy.

Step 1: generic bupropion extended-release tablets, generic bupropion sustained-release tablets

Step 2: Aplenzin, Auvelity, Forfivo XL, Wellbutrin SR, Wellbutrin XL

CRITERIA

1. If the patient has tried one Step 1 Product, approve a Step 2 Product.
Note: If the patient has tried bupropion immediate-release tablets, they must still try a generic sustained- or extended-release tablet before receiving authorization for a Step 2 Product.

2. No other exceptions are recommended.

REFERENCES

1. Wellbutrin SR® sustained-release tablets [prescribing information]. Research Triangle Park, NC: GlaxoSmithKline; October 2020.
2. Wellbutrin® tablets [prescribing information]. Research Triangle Park, NC: GlaxoSmithKline; October 2020.
3. Wellbutrin XL® extended-release tablets [prescribing information]. Bridgewater, NJ: Bausch Health; March 2022.
4. Aplenzin® extended-release tablets [prescribing information]. Bridgewater, NJ: Bausch Health; March 2022.
5. Forfivo XL extended-release tablets [prescribing information]. Pine Brook, NJ: Almatica; December 2019.
6. Auvelity™ extended-release tablets [prescribing information]. New York, NY: Axsome; August 2022.
7. Zyban® sustained-release tablets [prescribing information]. Research Triangle Park, NC: GlaxoSmithKline; March 2021.
8. FDA Update: bupropion hydrochloride extended-release 300 mg bioequivalence studies. Available at: http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/PostmarketDrugSafetyInformationforPatientsandProviders/ucm322161.htm. Accessed on March 21, 2022.

HISTORY

Type of Revision	Summary of Changes	Review Date
Annual Revision	No criteria changes.	03/24/2021
Annual Revision	No criteria changes.	03/23/2022
Selected Revision	**Auvelity:** Added to the policy as a Step 2 product. No criteria changes.	11/16/2022
Selected Revision	**Approval Duration:** Approval duration was changed from 3 years to 1 year.	11/30/2022