



NATIONAL PBM BULLETIN

February 8, 2007

**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION
PHARMACY BENEFITS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIC HEALTHCARE GROUP
AND MEDICAL ADVISORY PANEL**

Dear VA Clinician:

In December of 2006, the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) released a statement reinforcing their earlier recommendations that quinine should NOT be used for the prevention or treatment of nocturnal leg cramps because of the risk for serious adverse effects. Quinine associated adverse events, although rare, may include thrombocytopenia, arrhythmias, severe hypersensitivity reactions and even death. The adverse effects are unpredictable and may occur at any time even in an individual who has been taking quinine on a chronic basis without problems. As a result, the Department of Veterans Affairs will no longer provide quinine for leg cramps because of concern for patient safety. Quinine will continue to be available on a non formulary basis for the treatment of malaria. Please refer to the following links for additional information.

<http://www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/NEWS/2006/NEW01521.html> and
http://www.fda.gov/cder/drug/unapproved_drugs/quinineQA.pdf

At this time, other pharmacologic treatments have not been found to be helpful or have been inadequately studied. A letter of explanation for patients, available on the PBM website <http://vaww.pbm.va.gov/tig/Quinine%20for%20Leg%20Cramps%20Patient%20Letter.pdf> , makes the following non-pharmacologic self care suggestions:

1. Loosen up the covers/blankets over the feet at night to reduce the likelihood of your calf muscles contracting.
2. Try stretching your calf muscles several times a day. (Stand about two to three feet in front of a wall. Put your hands on the wall and lean forward without taking your heels off the ground. Hold for 10-30 seconds).
3. If a cramp does occur while lying in bed, try to stretch the muscle by first straightening your legs and flexing your feet towards your knees. It may be helpful to sit up and grab your toes and pull them towards your knees while keeping your legs straight or bending your knees if needed. You can also try massaging the muscle during the cramp to help it relax.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your VISN Formulary Leader or Pharmacist at your facility.