

## Varenicline (Chantix) Update

### What happened to Chantix?

In July 2021, Pfizer voluntarily recalled multiple lots of varenicline (Chantix) due to unacceptable levels of the carcinogen, N-nitroso-varenicline. Pfizer expanded this recall to include all lots in September 2021.

### Should my patient stop taking their recalled Chantix?

According to the FDA, patients should continue taking their current medication until a different treatment is prescribed. They state “the health benefits of stopping smoking outweigh the cancer risk from the nitrosamine impurity of varenicline.”

### Can I still prescribe non-Pfizer brand varenicline?

Limited quantities of Canadian brand varenicline, APO-Varenicline, are available in the United States. In general, Medicaid plans will NOT cover it. Some commercial plans may cover it. A PA is likely required.

### What other options are there for smoking cessation?

- Nicotine patches
- Nicotine gum
- Nicotine lozenges
- Nicotine nasal spray
- Nicotine oral inhaler
- Bupropion SR

### What if my patient cannot afford nicotine replacement therapy (NRT)?

Have your patient call the Ohio Tobacco Quit Line at **1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669)**. The Ohio Tobacco Quit Line provides personal quit coaching and telephone counseling free of charge to all Ohioans, regardless of insurance status or income. Patients enrolled in their program are eligible for **free** nicotine patches, gum, or lozenges.

Pregnant women can enroll in this program as well and are eligible for monetary rewards for participating:

- \$5 rewards card after first call
- \$5 rewards card per completed call during pregnancy (max \$25)
- \$10 rewards card per completed call after childbirth (max \$40)

### How else can I assist my patient with smoking cessation?

Send a referral to pharmacotherapy clinic! We will assist the patient with non-pharmacologic methods for smoking cessation, as well as connect them with pharmacologic therapy, if interested.