

COMMUNITY ADVISORY

JUNE 12, 2013

SERIOUS RISKS FROM EMERGING OPIOID: FENTANYL ANALOGUES

Accidental opioid deaths are a leading cause of unintentional death, surpassing fatalities from motor vehicle collisions in Ontario. Victims include citizens using opioids as prescribed; those experimenting; and/or those opioid addicted or opioid dependent.

Recent reports from USA and Canada suggests there is an increase in Fentanyl-detected overdose deaths due to Fentanyl manufactured in illegal labs. The onset of overdose associated with the Fentanyl analogues may occur more quickly than other opioid overdoses. It is important to call 911. A standard dose of the emergency medicine naloxone may NOT be effective.

Fentanyl analogues in pill and/or powder formats have been found in several Provinces and States: **British Columbia, Quebec, Ontario, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and New York.**

Street-level dealers may be unaware or are potentially misrepresenting the product to consumers. In powder formulation, Fentanyl may be sold as is, or mixed with, or sold as, oxycodone, heroin and/or other substances. **In May, Peterborough Lakefield Police Service seized pills appearing to be counterfeit OxyContin but which tested for high-dose Fentanyl.** North Bay Police have cautioned Desmethy Fentanyl may be present in the North Bay area.

Recent developments raise several serious concerns:

- the potential for a rise in accidental overdose death and injury for residents, and a consequent rise in hospital visits and admissions
- that people at risk of overdosing, or witnesses to an overdose, service providers and others do not have the intervention tools to appropriately respond to an overdose medical emergency, including access to a “take home naloxone” kit
- the absence of real-time monitoring systems for accidental overdoses in many jurisdictions means any substantial rise may not be detected for some time
- 911 call rates during illicit overdose emergencies continue to be low

Potential Precautions Could Include:

- Informing service providers and people at risk of, or witness to, an accidental overdose about the potential for unusually dangerous opioids being available on the black market
- Monitoring the local situation
- Reporting any (unusually fast) overdoses, increased overdose emergencies, and unusual drug seizures to appropriate authorities

We encourage you to share this advisory with your networks.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Fentanyl Media Reports - May / June 2013

British Columbia

Health workers urged to watch for suspicious overdoses (Office of the Provincial Health Officer)

http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/pho/media/pdf/IB_fentanyl_May%2029.pdf

Fentanyl a dangerous drug on Kelowna streets

<http://bc.cb.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/ViewPage.action?siteNodId=50&languageId=1&contentId=30534>

Powerful illicit opioid fentanyl has already killed 23 people in B.C.; Death toll already more than 2012

<http://www.theprovince.com/news/Powerful+illicit+opioid+fentanyl+already+killed+people+this+year/8456407/story.html>

Quebec

Extremely potent painkiller hits Montreal black market

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/health/story/2013/05/13/montreal-drug-seizure-fentanyl-bromadol-oxycodone.html>

Ontario

Drug Caution

<http://northbaypolice.ca/newsroom/news-releases/762-23-may-2013>

Rhode Island

The Rhode Island Department of Health Identifies New Synthetic Drug As Acetyl Fentanyl

<http://www.ri.gov/press/view/19458>

Pennsylvania

Dangerous synthetic drug causes 6 overdoses, 1 death in Lebanon County

http://www.pennlive.com/midstate/index.ssf/2013/06/officials_in_lebanon_county_at.html

Michigan

Emergency responders report a 20-fold increase in heroin overdoses downriver

<http://www.wxyz.com/dpp/news/health/emergency-responders-report-a-20-fold-increase-in-heroin-overdoses-downriver>

New York State

New heroin-fentanyl cocktail linked to deaths

<http://www.buffalonews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20130607/CITYANDREGION/130609332/1002>