



Overdose Monitoring, Alert and Response System
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – January 28, 2016

OVERDOSE ALERT

- There have been 5 non-fatal overdoses and one fatal overdose reported between January 23 and January 26 in Kitchener and Cambridge.
- Heroin is a substance of concern in 5 instances and Fentanyl in at least one instance. Toxicology results are pending.
- We are issuing this Alert to ensure people who are using substances, those providing direct service and associated friends and family are aware of an unusually high number of opioid overdoses.
- People who use substances occasionally and those using daily are potentially at risk of an accidental overdose. Describing people at-risk as 'addicts' and/or 'abusers' is popular, but not accurate.
- We encourage the public and service providers to confidentially report overdoses to improve monitoring using the form available at: <http://www.whatsyourrole.org>
- A copy of the Alert is attached and both service providers and the public are encouraged to share.

An Opioid Overdose is a Medical Emergency, and:

- Opioids include painkillers like oxycodone, hydromorphone, fentanyl, methadone, codeine, heroin etc.
- Seconds matter. A victim cannot save themselves. Witnesses to an overdose are the very first responders.
- Those at-risk of an opioid overdose include people using as prescribed or not.
- The presence of bootleg fentanyl (a high-dose, black market opioid) adds urgency to the opioid crisis. A record-setting number of deaths are occurring in Alberta, British Columbia and much of the U.S.A.
- Ontario has no (real time) surveillance, plan or crisis response in place.
- In Ontario one person dies from an opioid-related overdose every 14 hours. In Waterloo Region in 2013, opioid overdose deaths totalled 21 victims and deaths from motor vehicle collisions totalled 10 victims.

Naloxone is an emergency medicine that is:

- An opioid antagonist and a (temporary) antidote for an opioid-related overdose.
- A proven lifesaver and a World Health Organization-recommended Essential Medicine.
- Similar to epinephrine (e.g. EpiPen®) for anaphylaxis.
- Available for people who are using opioids via Sanguen Health Centre

The Waterloo Region Integrated Drugs Strategy is a community response to problematic substance use in Waterloo Region. The Strategy was developed by the Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council through a 26 member task force and local partners are implementing recommendations to improve health and safety in Waterloo region.

Concerned about the presence of bootleg fentanyl, the Waterloo Region Integrated Drugs Strategy will launch a community-based effort to monitor, alert and respond to overdoses on February 8, 2016.

For more information please contact:

- Paul Gregory - Waterloo Region Integrated Drugs Strategy - 647-920-3231
- Michael Parkinson - Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council - 519-504-8758
- Shirley Hilton - Waterloo Region Police Services - 519 650-8500 x8612
- Violet Umanetz - Sanguen Health Centre - 519-574-7222

For training on preventing an overdose and/or to access naloxone, contact:

- Sanguen Health Centre – 519-603-0223
- Waterloo Region Public Health – 519-575-4400