

Fentanyl Abuse in Queensland

The Drugs of Dependence Unit has noticed a large increase in the prescribing of fentanyl patches over the last 12 months. This appears to have been across all age groups but most noticeably there has been an increase in the prescribing of this medication for younger people.

We have also had a number of reports of people injecting the fentanyl after extracting it from the patches which has resulted in non-fatal and fatal overdose. The extraction of the fentanyl from the patches is relatively simple with information easily available over the internet. We have also experienced an increase in the number of people reporting fentanyl as their drug of choice at the needle and syringe programs and opioid treatment programs.

While this medication may appear to be “safer” than some other opioids we would encourage all GP’s to check the following when prescribing any opioid including fentanyl:

1. If possible check photographic ID of the patient – is this person really who they say they are?
2. Do they have a legitimate need for the medication? Is there documentation confirming a medical condition warranting opioid medication?
3. Check the patient for injecting marks – take the opportunity to check their blood pressure!
4. Ring **DDU Enquiry service Ph 3328 9890** to get a S8 medication history. We can tell you if the patient has a history of being on an opioid treatment program, doctor shopping or using excessive amounts of opioids.
5. Be aware that these medications are abused, diverted and injected – take a “universal precautions’ approach and treat all patients the same!

If you would be interested in any further information please call or email DDU Ph 3328 9890 or ddu@health.qld.gov.au

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