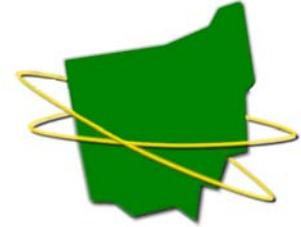




# OSAM-O-GRAM

DATE: April 2003  
DATELINE: Ohio



Wright State University  
The University of Akron

## Emerging Trend: Abuse of Fentanyl Patches Observed in Akron, Columbus, Dayton & Youngstown

At the January 2003 Core Scientific Meeting, the OSAM Network reported an emerging trend of fentanyl abuse in the Akron, Columbus, Dayton and Youngstown areas. Specifically, both active users and treatment providers report increasing diversion and abuse of fentanyl transdermal patches, marketed under the brand name of Duragesic. The patches deliver a steady dose of analgesia through the skin over a period of 72 hours. Drug users and treatment professionals report that fentanyl patches are misused in several ways: 1) transdermally, using several patches at once, 2) cutting the patches open and ingesting the gel, or 3) making a solution from the gel for IV injection. Active drug users in Dayton reported the following observations:

*Interviewer: The fentanyl [patches]. You've seen a lot of people using those?*

*Participant 1: Yeah.*

*Participant 2: [You can] stick them on yourself, cut up and lick them up or you can mix them with...*

*Participant 1: I shoot them.*

*Participant 2: You can mix them with like an alcohol and shoot them.*

Users who inject fentanyl obtained from transdermal patches are reportedly using various substances to dissolve the fentanyl gel, including ethanol and water. Observations shared by active drug users and front-line professionals are corroborated by Montgomery County Coroner's reports which show an increase in fentanyl-related overdose deaths. In 2000 there were two deaths related to fentanyl overdose and in 2001 there were five. Between January and August 2002, there were already five fentanyl-related overdose deaths reported.

The emergent phenomenon of fentanyl abuse among the "street" drug users is consistent with the continuing increases in pharmaceutical opioid diversion and abuse. The abuse of pharmaceutical analgesics will be further explored in an OSAM Network Rapid Response initiative being conducted for the January to June 2003 reporting period. The results of this Rapid Response investigation will be presented at the June 2003 OSAM Network meeting.

OSAM-O-GRAMS report key findings of the Ohio Substance Abuse Monitoring (OSAM) Network. Informants located throughout the state use qualitative and quantitative data to provide semiannual monitoring of substance abuse trends. The OSAM Network is funded by the Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services by contract to Wright State University and by subcontract to the University of Akron. This OSAM-O-GRAM is based on the January 2003 OSAM Network meeting.

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