

DATE: January 2008

DATELINE: Ohio

Wright State University &amp; the University of Akron

## Continuing Increases in the Diversion of Suboxone®

Approved in late 2002 by the US Food and Drug Administration, Suboxone® (buprenorphine and naloxone) and Subutex® (buprenorphine) are the only controlled substances that may be prescribed for the treatment of opioid addiction by a licensed physician in an office-based setting (as opposed to a specialized treatment center). Initially, laws regulating buprenorphine-based treatment had a restriction of 30 patients per practice. In December of 2006, new regulations allowed certified physicians to increase the number of patients from 30 to 100 after the first year of receiving a federal waiver to prescribe Suboxone® or Subutex®. In Ohio, illicit use of Suboxone® has generally been more common than that of Subutex®.

Initial OSAM Network reports about street availability of Suboxone® were obtained in Columbus in 2005. Since then, gradual increases in the diversion of Suboxone® have been reported by users in most areas of the state (Table 1). Largely consistent with user reports, crime lab data collected in January 2008 also indicated low availability of Suboxone® in all OSAM Network areas, except Cincinnati (where no cases of Suboxone® diversion were registered by the crime lab).

In most areas of the state, users reported declining street prices of Suboxone® from \$20 per 8-mg tablet in 2006 to \$5-\$10 in January 2008. OSAM Network reports suggest that users typically buy Suboxone® on the street to self-medicate their addiction to heroin or pharmaceutical opioids. To date, reports of using Suboxone® “to get high” have been rare across Ohio. For example, participants in Toledo commented on street usage of buprenorphine:

I've taken that [Suboxone®] a handful of times in the last year, actually...to get well... I had a connection for a little bit for it... It's very powerful... you can easily break it up, and you can take just a speck, but it's miraculous. (42-year-old white female heroin user)

I have got a couple phone calls saying “I want to start Suboxone® here because I've been buying it on the street, and it's working.” (Substance abuse treatment provider)

Although reports of Suboxone® diversion and abuse have been increasing across Ohio, street availability of buprenorphine-containing medications remains much lower than that of other pharmaceutical opioids, such as oxycodone, hydrocodone, and methadone tablets or wafers. The OSAM Network will continue to monitor this trend in future reports.

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 2008 OSAM Network meeting.

Center for Interventions, Treatment, and Addictions Research;

Robert G. Carlson, PhD, Raminta Daniulaityte, PhD, Tamara Hansen, MPH, Lawrence Hammar, PhD, Russel Falck, MA  
(937) 775-2066 (office), (937) 775-2214 (fax) <http://www.med.wright.edu/citar/>

Wright State University, Boonshoft School of Medicine, 3640 Colonel Glenn Hwy., Dayton, OH 45435-0001

For more information, visit the ODADAS website: <http://www.odadas.state.oh.us>

OSAM Network Area	June 2005	Jan. 2006	June 2006	Jan. 2007	June 2007	Jan. 2008
Akron/Canton						Low
Cleveland				Low		High
Youngstown						Mod
Toledo					Low	Mod
Dayton				Low	Low	
Cincinnati			Low	Low	Low	Low
Columbus	Low	Low	Low	Low		Low
Rural Southeast						