

## Opioids: Naloxone Access and Fentanyl Patch for Patch Policy

**Attention:** Physicians, Emergency Departments, Nurse Practitioners, Walk-In Clinics/Urgent Care Clinics, Family Health Teams, Pharmacies,

**Date:** November 3, 2016

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The purpose of this HealthFAX is to provide information on: 1) where to access naloxone in our community, and 2) the fentanyl patch-for-patch return policy (Safeguarding our Communities Act, 2015).

### **Background:**

In 2014, over 700 people died in Ontario from opioid-related causes, which is a 266 per cent increase since 2002. These deaths are directly attributed to use of both prescription and illicit opioids. Many opioids have been implicated, but fentanyl is now the number one cause of opioid-related death. Fentanyl has been found to be used for non-medical purposes in the form of diverted prescription patches. It is also now being detected in other illicit drugs including heroin and cocaine, and in counterfeit pills manufactured to resemble prescription opioids.

On October 12<sup>th</sup> 2016, the provincial government announced plans for Ontario's first [comprehensive strategy to prevent opioid addiction and overdose](#) by enhancing data collection, updating prescribing and dispensing practices, and increasing addiction treatment services.

### **Naloxone**

In response to increasing numbers of fatal and non-fatal opioid overdoses, the opioid antagonist naloxone is now available **free of charge** and without a prescription to people who use opioids, or concerned family members or friends. It can be accessed through selected local pharmacies, as listed on our website: <http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/docs/default-source/topic-drugsalcohol/simcoe-muskoka-naloxone-pharmacies20161031.pdf?sfvrsn=0>. Pharmacies listed may be at various stages of readiness to offer the naloxone due to training requirements and capacity, so calling ahead to determine availability is advised.

Naloxone kits and training are also available to people who use opioids, or concerned family members and friends, through the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit [Exchange Works program](#). Clients are encouraged to call Health Connection to book an appointment at 705-721-7520.

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO) advises physicians to encourage patients who may be at higher risk of overdose (i.e. criteria listed in *Dialogue*, Issue 3, 2016) to obtain naloxone.

The Ontario College of Pharmacists website (<http://www.ocpinfo.com/regulations-standards/policies-guidelines/naloxone-guidance/>) provides further information regarding the dispensing of naloxone, including a training module and guidance document.

### **Fentanyl Patch-for-Patch Return Policy (Safe Guarding Our Communities Act, 2015)**

Over the past two years, some communities in Simcoe and Muskoka have voluntarily implemented a Fentanyl Patch-for-Patch program through local collaborations, to prevent the diversion of patches. Beginning October 1, 2016, this has become a legal requirement across Ontario, in which patients are now only to be given new fentanyl patches when they return used patches to their pharmacy.

The [CPSO](#) and the Ontario [College of Pharmacists](#) are working collaboratively in communicating the expectations required under the legislation to their respective membership. Through the Patch for Patch

Return Program Fact Sheet (<http://www.cpso.on.ca/CPSO/media/documents/Policies/Policy-Items/Prescribing-Drugs-Fentanyl-FactSheet.pdf?ext=.pdf>) the following is indicated:

**Responsibilities of the physician/prescriber include:**

- Must record on every prescription for fentanyl the name and address of the pharmacy where the prescription will be filled.
- Must notify the pharmacy that each prescription has been written, either by faxing a copy of the prescription to the pharmacy or by telephone.
- When writing a patient's first prescription for fentanyl, prescribers must note "first prescription" on the prescription itself. A prescription is considered a "first prescription" when:
  - i. The prescriber has not previously prescribed a fentanyl patch for that patient; and
  - ii. The prescriber is reasonably satisfied that the patient has not previously obtained a prescription for fentanyl patches from another prescriber.

**Responsibilities of the pharmacist include:**

- Must confirm that the name and location of the pharmacy is recorded on the prescription by the prescriber, and that the pharmacy has been notified by the prescriber of the prescription before any patches are dispensed.
- Unless a first time prescription, dispensers must only dispense fentanyl patches in exchange for used patches provided by the patient or his or her authorized representative.
- Must examine and document returned patches, and store them in a secure location.
- Where a dispenser receives a prescription for fentanyl patches but does not collect all of the patient's used patches, or collects fewer patches than the quantity to be dispensed under the prescription, he or she must:
  - i. Use his or her professional judgment to dispense an appropriate number of patches based on an assessment of the patient, including an assessment of the patient's circumstances and the patient's medical condition; and
  - ii. Notify the prescribing physician of the number of used patches that were collected as well as the number of new patches that were dispensed, if any.

Additional details about this legislation and practice recommendations are available on the websites of both Colleges.