

Carfentanil Confirmed in Simcoe County

Attention: Physicians, Emergency Departments, Nurse Practitioners, Walk-In Clinics/Urgent Care Clinics, Family Health Teams, Neighbouring Health Units, County of Simcoe Paramedic Services, Medavie EMS Ontario – Muskoka, Rama Mnjikaning EMS, Midwives, NSM LHIN, Central LHIN

Date: June 2, 2017

The presence of carfentanil has been confirmed in Simcoe County. This is the first indication of carfentanil in the region.

On Monday, March 20, 2017, the Barrie Police Service attended a sudden death of a 26-year-old Barrie male. A small vial of white powder was seized. Testing performed by Health Canada recently confirmed the powder to be carfentanil. The exact cause of death will be determined pending the results of the post-mortem toxicology report.

What is carfentanil?

Carfentanil is a synthetic opioid derivative of fentanyl. It is intended for veterinary use as a sedative for large animals, and is not for human consumption. It is 100 times more potent than fentanyl and 10,000 times more so than morphine. Although never tested in humans, the lethal dose of carfentanil has been estimated at 20 mcg - perhaps the size of one grain of salt - and when mixed the drug cannot be seen, smelled, or tasted.

Illicit fentanyl and carfentanil may be found in other drugs such as cocaine, crack, counterfeit pills made to look like prescription drugs (i.e. OxyContin, Percocet), and in other pills including ecstasy (MDMA).

Health care providers are advised to consider the following:

- Effective management of overdoses due to carfentanil may require higher doses of naloxone.
- Patients who use opioids recreationally should be advised to avoid using other substances along with opioids, avoid using drugs alone, use smaller doses of a drug first to test strength, and use less of the drug when tolerance may be lower.
- Patients at risk for opioid overdose should be reminded that if an overdose is suspected or witnessed, they should immediately call 9-1-1, even if naloxone has been administered.

Patients can obtain naloxone kits from the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit <http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/Home.aspx>, by calling 705-721-7520, or visiting one of the offices.

For office locations: <http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/HealthUnit/Contact.aspx>.

Naloxone can also be accessed for free at participating pharmacies:

http://www.drugstrategy.ca/uploads/5/3/6/2/53627897/ontario_naloxone_pharmacies_drug_alc_helpline_aug_17_2016.xls