



DRUG ALERT: W-18 found in Kerrobert, Saskatchewan

SASKATOON, January 13, 2017 – The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan is advising physicians to exercise extreme vigilance and caution when treating cases of overdose in the province where Fentanyl and similar drugs are suspected.

Current information from a Health Canada Drug Analysis Service has confirmed the presence of a substance called **W-18**, a dangerous and potentially deadly synthetic research chemical, in a counterfeit Oxycodone tablet in the Kerrobert, Saskatchewan area.

Health Canada advises that W-18 “could also represent a threat to someone handling it without proper protection.”

Physicians, particularly emergency room physicians, hospital staff and other emergency respondents should be aware of the potential for exposure to the substance when responding to an emergency situation.

“It is important for the College to ensure that physicians are aware of the situation so that the appropriate safeguards may be in place to avoid a potentially dangerous situation. However, we also wish to ensure that appropriate care continues to be provided to patients who find themselves in distress due to an overdose,” stated Dr. Karen Shaw, Registrar for the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan.

Due to lack of evidence, it remains unknown whether naloxone would be effective in treating a W-18 overdose as it remains unknown whether it is an opioid. According to the Fraser Institute, “the only publicly available scientific report compares W-18 and related compounds to opioids, it does not determine whether or not W-18 binds to opioid receptors in the body.”¹ However, since W-18 is often combined with opioid drugs, it is still **recommended to administer naloxone** as a counter treatment.

Below are some links to additional information on W-18:

¹<http://www.fraserhealth.ca/health-professionals/medical-health-officer-updates/2016/substance-w-18-identified-in-lower-mainland>

<http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/recall-alert-rappel-avis/hc-sc/2016/58866a-eng.php>

Other information and related articles:

<https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Alberta/Pages/common-questions-w-18.aspx>

<http://biorxiv.org/content/early/2016/07/24/065623>

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/davidkroll/2016/04/30/w-18-the-high-potency-research-chemical-making-news-what-it-is-and-what-it-isnt/#6a22e94c2354>

http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2016/05/24/alberta-drug-abuse-w-18_n_10121536.html

*The mission of the **College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan** is to serve the public by regulating the practice of medicine and guiding the profession to achieve the highest standards of care. It currently issues licenses to more than 2,500 physicians and surgeons in the province, as well as over 1,500 corporate permits.*

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