



DRUG ALERT: Carfentanil found in Regina, Saskatchewan

SASKATOON, January 23, 2018 (UPDATED JANUARY 24, 2018) –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 **CARFENTANIL**, a dangerous and potentially deadly synthetic opioid considered 100 times more potent than fentanyl, found during a drug seizure in Regina, Saskatchewan.

Carfentanil could also represent a threat to someone handling it without proper protection and should not be handled without protective clothing and respiratory gear.

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 our duty to inform physicians about the situation so they may ensure the appropriate safeguards are in place to avoid a potentially dangerous situation,” stated Dr. Micheal Howard-Tripp, Deputy Registrar for the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan. “However, it is also important to ensure that appropriate care continues to be provided to patients who find themselves in distress due to an overdose.”

Although it is not known how effective **naloxone** may be to counter the effects of carfentanil, it is **recommended to use naloxone** as a first line of defense.

Information distributed by the Government of Saskatchewan, Health Emergency Management Unit, states that “synthetic opioids (including fentanyl and carfentanil) that are illicitly produced can be hazardous as the dose cannot be controlled. These substances are especially dangerous because there is no quality control or regulated manufacturing process, and therefore can have variable and potentially lethal potency.”

UPDATE: JANUARY 24, 2018 – Information from the Director of Toxicology, Ministry of Health confirms that carfentanil WILL NOT show up in the panel for the regular MS/MS drug toxicity screen (although fentanyl and norfentanyl do show up).

A patient suspected of overdose with a negative toxicity screen should be treated with naloxone and may require repeated dosing.

For more information on fentanyl and other substances, including the signs and symptoms of an opioid overdose, please visit <http://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/health/accessing-health-care-services/mental-health-and-addictions-support-services/alcohol-and-drug-support/alcohol--drug-and-addictions-resources#alcohol-and-drugs>.

For information on Take Home Naloxone kits and how to access a Take Home Naloxone kit, please visit <http://publications.gov.sk.ca/documents/13/99221-Program%20Kits-Community-Resources-2017.pdf>.

To locate Addictions/Mental Health Services near you, call HealthLine at 811 or visit online at www.healthlineonline.ca.

*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 1,700 corporate permits.*

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Information: Prescription Review Program
College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan
1 306 244-7355
prp@cps.sk.ca

Dr. Micheal Howard-Tripp
Deputy Registrar
College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan
1 306 244-7355

Source: Caro Gareau
Communications Officer || *Agente des communications*
College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan
1 306 667-4638 or 1 306 244-7355
communications@cps.sk.ca
cps.sk.ca