

North Bay and Area Drug Strategy Committee – Presentation to Rotary Club of North Bay – Pat Cliche, Committee Chair. January 27, 2014.

Fentanyl Misuse and Abuse in District of Nipissing

In September 2013, I was approached by the North Bay Police Service, Street Crime Unit expressing concern about the use of *Fentanyl Misuse & increasing deaths* due to this drug.

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid analgesic that is used clinically for the management of chronic pain. The abuse of fentanyl patches is not restricted to transdermal application and includes intravenous injection of patch contents, inhalation of fentanyl patches and oral transmucosal abuse.

There are several sources of illicit controlled prescription drugs: “double doctoring”, prescription forgeries, overprescribing, pharmacy robberies and B&Es and individuals with legitimate prescriptions diverting them. Misuse of prescription drugs and related harms –including overdose mortality – have emerged in North Bay as important challenges for law enforcement.

In North Bay, ***fentanyl-related*** deaths have been increasing since 2007. Between 2007 and 2013, there have been thirteen deaths in North Bay where ***fentanyl*** caused or contributed to death. Cases comprised 9 men and 4 women with ages ranging from 20 to 53 years.

Fentanyl has also been linked to an increasing number of non-fatal overdoses in North Bay. Since 2008, six people – 3 males and 3 females, have been admitted to the emergency department in North Bay as a consequence of ***fentanyl misuse and abuse***.

On October 22, 2013, in partnership with the North Bay Police Services and the North Bay & Area Drug Strategy Committee, a community Forum was held. Invitations were sent to all Family Practitioners and Pharmacists. They were invited to attend to discuss a strategy to deal with the issue of ***Fentanyl***. The North Bay Street Crime Detective told the audience what they were seeing on the streets (stories). OPP and Chief of Police from Sturgeon Falls, Chief of Staff from the North Bay Regional Hospital, Pharmacist from the pharmacy perspective and Dr. Ralph from the Addictions field all spoke of a possible plan from their perspective. A draft procedure on Fentanyl patch 4 patch was shared for consideration.

In November, the two Detective Constables from the North Bay Crime Unit and myself attended the North Bay Regional Hospital General Practitioners Meeting at Dr Preston’s request (22 in attendance). We presented the procedure, answered questions, officers once again told what they were seeing on the streets.

We had a meeting with the two pharmacists to review their section of the procedure which was approved.

On December 6, 2013 –A press conference was held at the North Bay Police Service Boardroom. A letter of agreement was signed by Dr. Preston, Chief Cook, Chief Sequin, OPP, Jennifer Sicard (Pharmacist Rep) and Pat Cliché for Drug Strategy. This was repeated in West Nipissing on December 15th.

Documents were sent to every pharmacy outlet in District of Nipissing. Every Family Physician at the North Bay Regional Hospital received a copy of the documents in the mail slot at the hospital or by mail courier. Physicians at West Nipissing and Mattawa also received these documents.

Documents were shared with:

- Peterborough Public Health Unit
- Simcoe Muskoka Public Health Unit
- Thunder Bay Health Unit
- Shoppers Drug Mart in Barrie
- Westboro Pharmasave in Ottawa

As well through the North Bay Police, the procedure has been shared with a variety of policing agencies in the province including the Ontario Provincial Police in Orillia.

However, since the implementation of this great strategy we have implemented an evaluation process so that we are able to determine if there are any issues.

It is known that on three occasion's patients have left the city and travelled to Barrie, Orillia and recently Bracebridge to fill their prescription of ***Fentanyl***.

A ***fentanyl patch*** that has not been used can be sold on the street for \$500.00. For example, if I have a prescription for 10 fentanyl patches, that is an easy \$5,000.00. Also, if the patch is used, they can earn \$250.00 a patch.

Since the District of Nipissing is the first area in the Province of Ontario to implement this type of procedure and we want to see it succeed, we needed to have a strategic plan to combat this issue.

We have a strong partnership with our enforcement, pharmacists and physicians. So our Crime Unit continues to identify the issues along with the pharmacists, to report it to the Chair of the Drug Strategy who in turns, notifies the Department of General & Family Practice, Medical Director of Primary Care. Dr. Preston and I wrote a letter to ***all physicians*** stating that when they write a prescription for Fentanyl, they ask what pharmacy they use and where it is located. They then write that on the prescription so the patient can only fill it here in North Bay and whenever possible fax the prescription to the pharmacy. (The new procedure was sent to all pharmacies and all physicians in the District of Nipissing) as well the above areas that I indicated above.

It would be very beneficial if this was legislated across the Province of Ontario as mandatory but also that prescriptions were not filled out of area especially for strong narcotics unless the patients had a letter from their attending physicians.

Attachments:

- Fentanyl Patch procedure
- Fentanyl Patch process
- Fentanyl Prescription Label