

MULTIPLE FEDERAL REPORTS SHOW THAT Methadone Prescribing to Pharmacies was a Failed and Deadly Experiment



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SAMHSA

PHARMACIES' METHADONE PRESCRIPTIONS FLOODED COMMUNITIES

- “The greatest incremental growth in methadone distribution in recent years is associated with use of the drug as an analgesic and its distribution through pharmacies. In fact, distribution of solid methadone formulations (tablets and diskettes), primarily through pharmacies, has surpassed distribution of the liquid formulations that are the mainstay of dispensing in OTPs. From 1998 through 2002, the volume of methadone distributed through pharmacies increased five-fold, whereas the volume distributed through OTPs increased only 1.5-fold.”

SIGNIFICANT INCREASES IN OVERDOSE DEATHS

- “A greater number of methadone-associated deaths were reported in 2001 alone than during the entire period from 1990 through 1999; this number doubled again in 2002.”
- “[T]he data confirm a correlation between increased methadone distribution through pharmacy channels and the rise in methadone-associated mortality. ...[M]ethadone tablets and/or diskettes that have become available through channels *other than OTPs are most likely the central factor in recent increases in methadone-associated mortality.*” “In the cases in which the sources of methadone associated with deaths could be traced, OTPs did not appear to be involved.”

DANGEROUS METHADONE DIVERSION SKYROCKETED

- “Methadone tablet seizures [the formulation prescribed for pain] increased 133 percent between 2001 and 2002; in contrast, seizures of liquid methadone [the formulation administered in OTPs] increased only 11 percent during the same period.”

SIGNIFICANT INCREASES IN OVERDOSE DEATHS RESULTING FROM METHADONE PRESCRIPTIONS FILLED IN PHARMACIES

- “Methadone is a safe and effective drug when used as prescribed; however, when it is misused or abused--particularly in combination with other prescription drugs, illicit drugs, or alcohol--death or nonfatal overdose is likely to occur.”
- “In the late 1990s methadone became widely prescribed to treat acute and chronic pain because physicians sought an alternate analgesic to oxycodone (OxyContin) and hydrocodone (Vicodin), which were being increasingly diverted and abused.” Not coincidentally, DOJ reported that “methadone poisoning deaths nationwide increased significantly [390%] from 1999 through 2004, and data indicate that the number of deaths in many states continued to increase in 2005 and 2006.”
- “Most deaths are attributed to the abuse of methadone diverted from hospitals, **pharmacies, practitioners, and pain management physicians.**”
- “Methadone deaths often do not involve individuals who had access to methadone dispensed through treatment programs, according to SAMHSA.”



PATIENTS NEED TO BE PROPERLY INDUCTED BY TRAINED MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS

- “Proper dosing during the initial stage of treatment, even among opioid-tolerant individuals, is critical to ensuring that an overdose does not occur. ...When methadone is used improperly (such as too frequently during the initial stages of treatment), concentrations of the drug in the body can accumulate, resulting in toxicity.”

DANGEROUS METHADONE DIVERSION SKYROCKETED

- “Methadone was not listed among the 25 most frequently identified drugs in 2000 but progressed in rank from sixteenth in 2001 to tenth in 2006, indicating an increase in diversion and illicit availability.
- Personal use quantities of methadone commonly are diverted through prescription fraud, **theft of prescription pads from doctors' offices, theft from pharmacies,** and theft from family and friends.”
- The number of individuals calling poison control centers to report adverse reactions or nonfatal overdoses from unintentional misuse of prescription and diverted methadone increased 57% from 2002 to 2005.



U.S. Department of Justice, National Drug Intelligence Center | Nov 16, 2007
[Methadone Diversion, Abuse, and Misuse: Deaths Increasing at Alarming Rate](#)

- “Several risk factors for methadone-related mortality have been identified [including] ...inadequate or erroneous induction dosing and monitoring by physicians.”
- “even small doses of diverted methadone can result in death.”
- “current data indicate that most methadone-associated deaths, where dosage form information is available, involve 5 and 10 mg tablets. However, it is not clear whether those tablets are obtained through legal prescriptions, prescription forgeries, other diversion tactics, or pharmacy thefts or robberies.”



SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Treatment | 2007
[Methadone Mortality – A Reassessment: Summary Report of the Meeting](#)

METHADONE PRESCRIPTIONS FILLED IN PHARMACIES DIRECTLY TIED TO INCREASED DEATH

- “Most officials from federal and state agencies, as well as experts in addiction treatment and pain management that we spoke with, cited the increased availability of methadone due to its use for pain management as a key factor in the rise in deaths, while some added that addiction treatment in OTPs was not related to increased deaths. Federal officials and experts in epidemiology, pain management, and addiction treatment at SAMHSA’s National Assessment of Methadone-Associated Mortality in 2003 also acknowledged a **correlation between the increased distribution of methadone through pharmacies for pain management with the increase in methadone-associated overdose deaths** and reached consensus that the increase in these deaths was not associated with addiction treatment in OTPs.”

METHADONE PHARMACY PRESCRIPTIONS LEAD TO HIGHER RATES OF DANGEROUS DIVERSION

- “In 2007, DEA reported that per prescription, methadone was more likely to be diverted and abused than either hydrocodone or oxycodone based on its analysis of data from the National Forensic Laboratory Information System and IMS Health.”
- “Likewise, DEA data on drug theft and loss showed that methadone thefts nationwide more than doubled ...in 2007. For the five states we reviewed, the data showed that **most thefts were reported from pharmacies, while no thefts were reported from OTPs** in four of these states during the same time period.”
- “While research suggests that the source of methadone for those who die from overdose deaths is often unknown, available information indicates that ...generally more of those who died had a prescription for methadone or obtained it through diversion rather than receiving methadone for addiction treatment in an OTP.”



Government Accountability Office | 2009

[Methadone Associated Overdose Deaths: Factors Contributing to Increased Deaths and Efforts to Prevent Them](#)

SIGNIFICANT INCREASES IN OVERDOSE DEATHS RESULTING FROM METHADONE PRESCRIPTIONS FILLED IN PHARMACIES

- “According to the FDA, the number of unique patients receiving a prescription for methadone from 2002 to 2009 increased by 103 percent.” Meanwhile, CDC’s National Vital Statistics System data shows a **589 percent increase in deaths in the U.S. involving methadone from 1999 to 2007.**

METHADONE PHARMACY PRESCRIPTIONS LEAD TO HIGHER RATES OF DANGEROUS DIVERSION

- “Methadone is more likely to be diverted than oxycodone or buprenorphine. ...While all formulations of methadone are diverted, tablets (which are prescribed for pain) are the most likely to be involved.”



SAMHSA’s Center for Substance Abuse Treatment | 2010

[Methadone Mortality – A Reassessment](#)

PROGRAM, *not a pill.*

Medication-Assisted Treatment for OUD

programnotapill.com