

MEMORANDUM

TO: Emergency Medicine Providers, EMS

FROM: Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH)

DATE: May 10, 2017

SUBJECT: Acryl fentanyl related overdoses identified in Illinois

I. PURPOSE

This alert serves as an awareness to emergency medicine and EMS providers that deaths attributed to acryl fentanyl, a new powerful fentanyl analog, have been reported in Illinois

II. BACKGROUND

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid pain reliever that is 50-100 times more potent than morphine. Acryl fentanyl is a newly recognized fentanyl analog. The Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) reported the presence of acryl fentanyl at the scene of fatal opioid overdoses in other states, and a recent Cook County Medical Examiner release reported the presence of, and rise of, opioid related overdoses due to acryl fentanyl (<https://www.cookcountyil.gov/news/medical-examiner-reports-deaths-caused-powerful-opioid>).

Naloxone (also called Narcan) is an opioid antagonist capable of reversing opioid overdoses, making it a lifesaving measure employed by emergency and first responders. Recent reports, however, have suggested that overdoses due to acryl fentanyl have been more resistant to naloxone, and have required increased doses to allow for reversal.

III. IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS FOR FIRST RESPONDERS AND MEDICAL PROVIDERS

- When opioid overdose is suspected, naloxone (opioid reversal agent) should be used per typical protocol, with awareness that **more and prolonged administrations of naloxone may be required.**

- As with any suspected opioid overdose, special attention should be paid to the airway with a low threshold for airway support.
- Fentanyl and fentanyl derivatives can be absorbed through the skin and accidental inhalation of airborne powder can also occur.
- First responders should practice standard safety precautions, and at the minimum use gloves and a mask when attending to individuals with suspected overdoses.

IV. OVERDOSE PREVENTION AND HARM REDUCTION

- Encourage patients (and their family and friends) to carry naloxone:
 - Any licensed physician can write a prescription for naloxone, which patients can fill in a pharmacy. Any licensed physician can also write a prescription for naloxone for friends and family of a patient who is using opioids.
 - The Illinois Heroin Crisis Act of 2015 requires that Medicaid/MCOs cover naloxone and Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT)
- Talk to patients about their readiness to engage in treatment:
 - Let them know that MAT has good outcomes for people with opioid use disorder. Methadone, buprenorphine, and extended release injectable naltrexone are all FDA-approved medications for opioid use disorder.
 - If patients express interest but are not sure where they can go for treatment, they can call the Illinois Department of Human Services' Division of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse (DASA) at (312) 814-2840 to get a list of addiction treatment locations.
- Educate patients (and their family and friends) on harm reduction techniques to avoid overdose and death:
 - Avoid using drugs alone.
 - Avoid mixing drugs when possible, especially multiple “downers” that can cause respiratory depression.
 - Carry an overdose rescue kit (naloxone) and be sure others know you have.

V. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

IDPH website: <http://dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/prevention-wellness/prescription-opioids-and-heroin>