

# **BASES Bulletin 6-06: Fentanyl**

One drug emerges as the popular drug for the moment and is soon replaced by the next. Our society has a quick fix mentality and we want what we want, right now. Individuals will use drugs in combination with other drugs and the end result may be death. Each decade presents a new set of drugs and the variety increases with selection and potency. The government is currently investigating deaths among users of fentanyl patches. "In just one week in May, an estimated 33 individuals in the Detroit area are reported to have died after using the fatal drug mix of fentanyl and heroin or cocaine." (Join Together / SAMSHA Alert 6/9/06)

Fentanyl is a powerful narcotic analgesic and when used in excessive amounts can cause:

- Slowed breathing or inability to breathe,
- Irregular heart beat,
- Slowed pulse rate,
- Lowered blood pressure and body temperature,
- Confusion,
- Severe drowsiness,
- Feeling faint or dizzy,
- Seizures,
- Coma and death.

Fentanyl should only be used by patients who are under a doctors care for pain issues and have developed a tolerance to other opiate drugs. The patches are for round the clock pain management. Disposal of the patches should be done properly and not left where children or adolescents can access them. Recommended disposal is to stick the adhesive sides together and flush down the toilet - not in the trash can.

When an individual purchases illegal substances they are not aware of what other substances were used to cut the product or added to the product. Individuals may seek to self medicate and trade substances. This is becoming more common for individuals aged 20 to 30 years old. Quite often the user does not examine the drug interaction with another drug, dose limits and other risks listed on the bottle or information sheet that accompanies the drug. Laws are changing and when someone overdoses from a drug or mixture of drugs the individual who supplied the drug will be held accountable and prosecuted.