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Fentanyl Pain Patch Defects Cause Death

Fentanyl is a dangerous opioid drug that is 100 times stronger than morphine. Fentanyl transdermal pain patches are approved for moderate to severe chronic pain, and should be prescribed only to patients who are accustomed to powerful narcotic drugs. Patients and caregivers who come in contact with a leaking patch may have difficulty breathing, or potentially be victims of a fatal overdose. Additionally, the FDA has investigated deaths and life-threatening side effects in patients who never should have been prescribed the patch. Most recently, in late December 2008, Johnson & Johnson unit recalls pain patches over defects in the packaging.



Most recently, Johnson & Johnson, in late December said its PriCara division recalled two lots of the pain patch Duragesic, or fentanyl, because of tears in the products that could expose users directly to the product's powerful and deadly fentanyl gel, causing an overdose. In February, the company issued a similar recall, but on a larger scale for a less potent dosage of the drug. In a statement, the company said the latest manufacturing problems have been corrected.

Duragesic, or fentanyl, is a potent opioid pain reliever and skin exposure directly to the gel within the patch can lead to respiratory problems and a fatal overdose. ALZA Corp., an affiliate of PriCara, manufactured **the patches being recalled**. The company said Duragesic 50 mcg/hr patches under the *lot number 0817239* are being recalled. Anyone with that product should call **800-547-6446**. Also, Sandoz Inc. 50 mcg/hr patches under the *lot number 0816851* are being recalled. People with products containing that lot number should call **800-901-7236**.

PriCara urged anyone who comes in contact with fentanyl gel to thoroughly wash exposed skin with water only as anything else may only increase the medicine's ability to go through the skin. Patches with cut edges should be carefully disposed of by flushing them down the toilet, without directly handling them.

The latest problem is smaller than a February recall when all lots of 25 mcg/hr patches, a less potent dose, were recalled. Those products had similar defects and were also manufactured by ALZA.

PriCara is a division of Ortho-McNeil-Janssen Pharmaceuticals Inc., a unit of consumer and health care products company Johnson & Johnson.

The recall is being conducted in conjunction with the Food and Drug Administration. Other strengths including 12.5, 25, 75 and 100 mcg/hr are not affected, the company added.

In December of 2007, the FDA issued its second Public Health Advisory regarding fentanyl pain patches which stated that "reports indicate that doctors have inappropriately prescribed the fentanyl patch to patients for acute pain following surgery, for headaches, occasional or mild pain, and other indications for which a fentanyl patch should not be prescribed."

Manufacturers of fentanyl transdermal pain patches have voluntarily recalled numerous lots of their patches and the FDA has issued Public Health Advisories related to the fentanyl patch dangers.

These manufacturers include:

- Janssen Pharmaceutica Products, L.P.
- Alza Corporation; Actavis South Atlantic, LL
- Sandoz; Cephalon, Inc. and
- Mylan.

In November 2008, Heygood, Orr, Reyes, Pearson & Bartolomei achieved a \$16.56 million jury verdict for the family of an Illinois woman (Janice DiCosolo). Ms. DiCosolo died when the patch leaked a fatal dose of fentanyl into her body. Back in June 2007, Heygood, Orr, Reyes, Pearson & Bartolomei achieved a \$5.5 million jury verdict for the family of a 28-year-old Florida man (Adam Hendelson) who died while wearing a Duragesic fentanyl drug patch. To date, the DiCosolo verdict is the largest verdict in the nation against the manufacturers of Duragesic.

Our firm is now pursuing cases involving the manufacturers of all fentanyl transdermal pain patches. If you know of anyone who may have suffered personal injuries or death as a result of using any brand of fentanyl pain patch, contact us immediately for a free consultation.

Heygood, Orr, Reyes, Pearson & Bartolomei is a Martindale-Hubbell AV-rated law firm that focuses its practice on complex business litigation and life-altering/wrongful death personal injury lawsuits. More information on the firm is available at www.ReyesLaw.com.

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