

The New Oxycontin Pill Formulation Approved by FDA



OP vs. OC



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The New Oxycontin

The Last Several Years with Oxycontin:

OxyContin was the top-selling prescription painkiller in the U.S. last year with sales of nearly \$2.3 billion, according to medical research firm IMS Health. The drug accounts for more than half the market for codeine-derived drugs, which also includes Vicodin and various generic medications.

More than 50 million Americans have admitted to abusing prescription drugs. That's led 39 states to take steps to monitor prescription drug use, CBS News correspondent Bryon Pitts reported in July. (1) According to the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Survey on Drug Use and Health, approximately half a million people used OxyContin non-medically for the first time in 2008.

Drug fads and trends come and go. We certainly saw a spike in the prevalence of ecstasy in the late nineties, but our program has never seen such a spike in prevalence of use of a certain drug like it has with Oxycontin. Of the past 4 years we have had more and more young adults using oxy, and in the last two years we started to get teens that were using it and heroin.

The users do not take the drug in the pill form. The pill form has a coating on the outside which is the slow release component of this medication. To get the most out of the high, the clients would scrape away the slow release coating to get right at the oxycondone. Once the user has scrapped away the slow release properties of the pill they would snort it, inject it or smoke it.

The cost has been \$40 for an 80 mg pill, but now that they supply of this drug is running out in pharmacies and being replaced with the new formulation, the price has doubled. Over time many users discovered that they could by heroin much much cheaper and this led to us treating more teenage, yes teenage, and young adult heroin users.

Now the Formulation of Oxycontin has Changed:

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved a new formulation of the controlled-release drug OxyContin that is designed to be more difficult to manipulate by someone trying to misuse or abuse the medication. The new pills have the letters OP on them vs. OC.

OxyContin tablets contain the opioid analgesic oxycodone, which is released gradually after the tablet is swallowed. FDA approval of the new OxyContin formulation was reported April 15, 2010 . **The new formulation makes it more difficult for people to defeat the controlled-release properties of the drug by cutting or crushing the tablets. And if someone tries to dissolve the tablets, the result will be a gummy substance that would be difficult to inject through a syringe.(2) Moreover, it is very difficult to turn the pill to a powder.** "Although this new formulation of OxyContin may provide only an incremental advantage over the current version of the drug, it is still a step in the right direction," said Bob Rappaport, M.D., director of the Division of Anesthesia and Analgesia Products in the FDA's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research.

(continued)

Now What?

The good news is that people will not be abusing Oxycontin. The bad news is that now that the addict has a relationship with opiate intoxication there is a strong chance that they will seek out heroin, hydromorphone or other powerful opiates. There might also be increased crime as people seek what is left of the old Oxycontin until it is completely off of the pharmacy shelves and streets. Luckily we and others have found that the combination of the medicine Buprenorphine along with addiction treatment, people can recover their lives and be free from the tight grip of opiate addiction.

References:

- 1. <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2009/09/22/health/main5329344.shtml>
- 2. <http://www.healthnews.com/medical-updates/new-formulation-for-oxycontin-4289.html>
- 3. New and Old Oxy Images: http://www.justice.gov/dea/images_oxycontin.html

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