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Letter to the Editor

“Who is to Blame for so many Overdose Deaths?”

Dear Editor,

Much has been said and written about West Virginia leading the way in Overdose deaths to the point where households need to keep Naloxone as a rescue med in the home.

Fentanyl and heroin are often combined as a lethal combination. Where are these coming from and how can it be curtailed? Heroin comes from across our borders and is the responsibility of the DEA. Fentanyl is a synthesized form of Morphine that is much more potent than Morphine and Heroin.

As a health care provider in West Virginia, I am appalled that for all the danger Fentanyl patches are, West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources' WVDHHR has made it the drug of choice, the first line drug for long acting pain relief. To me, this sounds incredulous that this state agency would force clinicians to prescribe this very dangerous drug as a first choice for pain relief. This Fentanyl patch is made in West Virginia by Mylan, a major pharmaceutical with ties to our state government. This Fentanyl patch is called “Lippin” and has no drug deterrent properties and instead is easily used in drug diversion.

If you want to put a big dent in deaths caused by Fentanyl, I would suggest that the WVDHHR remove Fentanyl from its formulary of first approved drugs and instead switch it with slightly more expensive tamper resistant Opioids which have far less street value and better safety properties. At last review, the West Virginia Board of Pharmacy identified 400,000 Rx written in 2015!

Sincerely
Roland Chalifoux Jr., DO
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