



To: ALL HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS  
From: Ron Kirschner, MD, Medical Director  
Subject: Complications of parenteral oral analgesic abuse  
Date: 8/9/13

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- Widespread use of opioid analgesics has led to an epidemic of abuse and addiction. Oxycodone and extended release Oxycontin<sup>®</sup> are among the most widely abused drugs.
- Abusers seeking an immediate high often crush the pills and inject intravenously (IV) or insufflate nasally (snort).
- Complications of IV oral analgesic abuse include opioid overdose, infection, microemboli, and vascular injury.
- In 2010 the manufacturer of Oxycontin<sup>®</sup> introduced an abuse-resistant formulation. When crushed it becomes a gel that is difficult to snort or inject.
- Abusers have increasingly turned to alternatives, including heroin, and other opioid analgesics such as oxymorphone (Opana<sup>®</sup>, Opana ER<sup>®</sup>).
  - In February 2012 an abuse resistant formulation of Opana ER was introduced.
- In August 2012 a cluster of thrombotic thrombocytopenic purpura (TTP) was reported among IV abusers of the reformulated Opana ER.
  - TTP is a rare disorder characterized by microangiopathic hemolytic anemia and thrombocytopenia, often with renal or CNS effects.
  - TTP has not been associated with oral Opana abuse or injection of other opioids.
  - Injection of an ingredient in the abuse-resistant Opana ER formulation is thought to be the cause, but the exact mechanism remains unclear.
- Patients with features of TTP should be questioned about parenteral Opana abuse.
- A CBC should be obtained in patients with a history of injecting Opana ER.
- Treatment is supportive care, which may include plasma exchange/plasmapheresis.

#### References

CDC, TTP-like illness associated with IV Opana ER abuse – Tennessee 2012, *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep.* 2013 Jan 11;62(1):1.  
Nguyen TC, Han YY. Plasma exchange therapy for thrombotic microangiopathies. *Organogenesis* 2011; 7: 28.

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