

CLINICAL UPDATE

03/08/2023

IMPORTANT INFORMATION: Potent Synthetic Opioids Implicated in Heroin Overdoses and Deaths.

Potential synthetic opioids implicated in heroin overdoses and deaths.

A National Patient Safety Alert (NatPSA/2023/009/OHID) has been issued for action by Ambulance Trusts and other relevant organisations in response to an elevated number of overdoses and deaths in people who use drugs, primarily heroin.

- Nitazenes, a group of potent synthetic opioids have been implicated in some of these cases.
- There is a risk of severe toxicity resulting from adulteration of heroin with potent synthetic opioids.
- Be alert to the symptoms of opioid overdose in known and suspected heroin users.
- Suspected opioid overdose cases should be assessed rapidly.
- The potency and toxicity of nitazenes is perhaps similar to, or more than, fentanyl, which is about 100x morphine.
- Communicate these risks and harm reduction messages to heroin users during any contacts.
- Advise people who use heroin and others who might encounter an opioid overdose to have naloxone available.
- Treat suspected cases as for any opioid overdose, using naloxone and appropriate supportive care.
- The duration of action of naloxone is shorter than that of many opioids and appropriate monitoring and further doses of naloxone may be required.

Please report any incidents relating to this alert internally via datix.

Please contact the Andy Cooke, Trust Pharmacist

Andrew.cooke@eastamb.nhs.uk , or the medicines management team

MedicineManagement@eastamb.nhs.uk for any further information relating to this communication.