





A study of deaths involving oxycodone.

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Abstract

Nine deaths involving oxycodone were investigated to assess the contribution of this opiate to these fatalities. All except one of the bodies were subjected to a full autopsy by specialist pathologists with a subsequent thorough toxicological examination. No significant anatomical pathology was found at autopsy. All deaths gave concentrations of oxycodone in femoral blood higher than expected following normal therapeutic use. In three cases no other drug in toxic concentrations was detected. Two cases involved the presence of a high concentration of a benzodiazepine and in a further two cases a high concentration of alcohol in addition to other drugs in therapeutic concentrations were present. One case involved methamphetamine in significant concentrations and another involved high concentrations of oxazepam in combination with pethidine. In all cases the presence of oxycodone was given as a factor contributing to the death. In only one case were there circumstances clearly indicating suicide. Our observations suggest that oxycodone is at least as toxic as other opiates and will cause deaths if misused.

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