

Despite warning, doctors stick with patch

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Many doctors are overlooking Food and Drug Administration warnings about delivering the painkiller fentanyl through a skin patch.

In 2005, after the opium-like drug killed a number of patients, the FDA issued a warning that said the painkiller in patch form should be prescribed in low doses and was not be used for patients recovering from surgery, the Los Angeles Times reported Monday.

But since then hundreds of patients have died because healthcare providers have not gotten the message, and prescriptions of the patch did not decrease after the warning was issued.

The problem is even more pressing because a number of other drugs are beginning to be available in patch form, the newspaper said. Though patches can be an easier way to administer drugs, it is more difficult to make sure patients with widely varying body chemistry get the right amount at the right time.

Ortho-McNeil, which makes the brand name form of the drug, called Duragesic, told the Times it would support efforts to make sure the product is used safely.

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