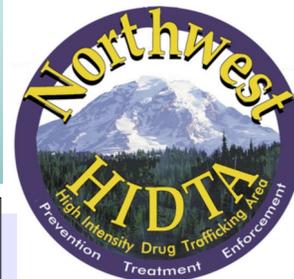
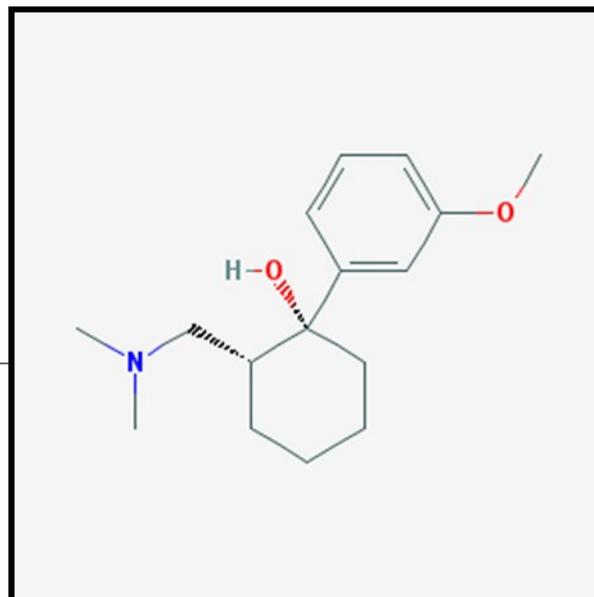


NW HIDTA Intelligence Bulletin



Tramadol: Potential for Abuse

Tramadol is a non-controlled analgesic that is marketed under the trade names Ultram® and Ultracet® among other generic names and is used for the treatment of moderate to moderately-severe pain in adults and pets, particularly dogs and cats. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has not recommended scheduling of this substance in the Controlled Substances Act (CSA), which is a requirement for the Drug Enforcement Administration to place a substance under control. Yet, there have been a number of reports of abuse and addiction to this medication.



Chemical Composition of Tramadol
<http://pubchem.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/>

The Food and Drug Administration has required that the manufacturer of Ultram® inform physicians of recent drug abuse data. Despite the updated labeling information under the Drug Abuse and Dependence Section, abuse of the drug remains a cause of concern. Abuse occurs primarily in narcotic addicts, chronic pain patients, and health care professionals.¹

Arkansas, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Tennessee, and Wyoming have classified Tramadol as a controlled substance under state laws. It is likely that this drug will gain in popularity with opiate users because it is less regulated than those prescription opiate drugs which fall under the CSA.

¹ Drug Enforcement Administration, Office of Diversion Control, Drug & Chemical Evaluation Section, Tramadol, February 2011



Tramadol: Potential for Abuse



A study of Tramadol concentration in death investigations and impaired driving cases was published in the Journal of Forensic Science, September 2004. Officials reviewed 66 deaths in the state between 1995 and 2000 in which Tramadol was detected. A series of 83 impaired driving cases were also reviewed for non-lethal blood concentrations of Tramadol. In both cases of deaths and impaired driving, death was rarely attributed solely to Tramadol, but the drug was a significant contributor to lethal intoxication when taken in excess with other drugs. Despite increases in Tramadol detection throughout an eight year period, there was no corresponding evidence that the drug was the sole cause of deaths. The study suggests that Tramadol even when used in moderate excess is not the principle cause of death in suicidal or accidental death.²

The Northwest HIDTA will work closely with its Treatment/Prevention and law enforcement partners to monitor the potential for abuse of this drug.

² <http://ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/1546118>

Questions regarding this bulletin and requests for additional information can be directed to the Northwest HIDTA, Investigative Support Center (ISC) at (206) 352-3679 or deconfliction@nw.hidta.org.