

# High Strength Opioid Formulations in Ontario: By the Numbers

A Report by the Ontario Drug Policy Research Network

## SCOPE OF THE ISSUE:

Recently announced Ontario Drug Benefit (ODB) program changes to reimbursement for high-strength long-acting opioids have elicited much discussion regarding their potential impact and implications in palliative care. The ODPRN conducted a rapid-analysis to inform current discussions on the utilization of these formulations in the ODB and their usage among palliative care patients.

**Table 1: Prevalence of High Strength Opioid Tablets and Patches in FY2014/15**

Opioid	Long-acting Tablets/Patches* N	High Strength Formulations N(%)
<b>Overall</b>	<b>42,403,653</b>	<b>4,490,196 (10.6%)</b>
Morphine	14,533,986	288,411 (2.0%)
Fentanyl	2,557,504	1,223,735 (47.9%)
Hydromorphone	25,312,163	2,978,051 (11.8%)

**Table 2: Patterns of High Strength Opioid Users and Prevalence of Palliative Care in FY2014/15**

Opioid Users	N(%)
<b>Users of long-acting opioids*</b>	<b>87,453</b>
Users of high strength formulations	13,695 (15.7%)
High strength opioid users with palliative care in prior 6 months	1,349 (9.9%)

\*morphine, fentanyl, or hydromorphone

**Table 3: Opioid Use among Palliative Care Patients in Ontario in FY2014/15**

Palliative Care Patients	N(%)
<b>Number of palliative care patients in Ontario</b>	<b>62,602</b>
Palliative care patients with any opioid reimbursed by ODB	26,620 (42.5%)
Palliative care patients with any high strength opioid* reimbursed by ODB	1,673 (2.7%)

\*morphine, fentanyl, or hydromorphone

## BRIEF METHODOLOGICAL DETAILS:

Study Period: April 1, 2014 to March 31, 2015

High Strength Opioid Formulations:

Hydromorphone: 24mg and 30mg; Morphine: 200mg; Fentanyl 75mcg/hr and 100mcg/hr

Palliative Care: Defined using OHIP fee codes for palliative care services, or inpatient hospitalizations with a palliative care patient service.

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