



Mental Health and Recovery Services Board

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PRESS RELEASE

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Neurontin widely sought written by Mircea Handru, MBA

Neurontin (gabapentin) is an anticonvulsant medication which is used to treat nerve pain in adults. It is also used to treat seizures in adults and children who are at least three years old. The U.S Centers for Disease Control and Prevention lists gabapentin as an appropriate non-opioid treatment for chronic pain. Gabapentin is a non-narcotic medication thought to have a low abuse profile.

The Ohio Substance Abuse Monitoring Network issued an alert last week. According to the Ohio Board of Pharmacy, data found gabapentin to be the number one drug dispensed in the state in December 2016. Gabapentin was dispensed at a greater rate than any other controlled substance. In fact, it was dispensed at a 30 percent higher rate than the number two drug for the month, oxycodone.

Through a survey, participants and community professionals described typical illicit gabapentin users as opiate addicted. Through some of the feedback, it was described that opiate addicts take gabapentin to self-medicate through periods of withdrawal, while those receiving Medication Assisted Treatment take the drug for the slight high in procedures. It appears that many crush up and snort gabapentin. According to law enforcement officers in some areas of the state, gabapentin is highly abused right now, and it appears that doctors are prescribing it more and more.

This matter was discussed with some of our local law enforcement and treatment agencies. It appears that we haven't seen the increase as other parts of the state. However, we need to be aware. Most urine drug tests are used to screen for the use of narcotics, and gabapentin is not a narcotic. So, gabapentin usage may not be detected by a drug screen. Gabapentin is also not a scheduled substance, which means it's not as highly controlled as other prescription pain relievers.

Weren't we here before? In 1995, FDA allowed Purdue to claim that OxyContin had a lower potential for abuse than other prescription medication. In 1996, physicians started treating chronic pain with OxyContin because it was claimed to be non-addicting. The result?

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