



NEWS RELEASE

Purdue Pharma supports task force recommendations.

For immediate release

Toronto, Ontario – February 12, 2004 – The Executive Vice President and General Manager of Purdue Pharma announced today his company is taking a leading role in implementing key recommendations of Newfoundland and Labrador's Task Force on the prevention of abuse of OxyContin[®] and other opioid analgesics (painkillers). John Stewart said, "Purdue Pharma takes great pride in educational programs for healthcare professionals and our participation in this Task Force is a perfect fit".

Mr. Stewart continued, "We are confident that our support of current and future educational programs for doctors and pharmacists in Newfoundland and Labrador will improve pain assessment and treatment. These programs will also help doctors identify potential abusers, ensuring that patients truly in need of OxyContin to relieve their pain will continue to receive it, while helping reduce diversion and abuse. Enhancing the delivery of pain management in this province is of crucial importance to patients who are in moderate to severe pain."

Purdue has several educational programs that deal with the assessment, treatment, documentation and follow up of patients suffering from both cancer and non-cancer pain. These programs have been developed in consultation with leading pain experts across Canada, and follow the recommendations of organizations such as the Canadian Pain Society, and the evidence-based guidelines developed by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO) that the Newfoundland Medical Association adopted in 2001.

Purdue Pharma is also supportive of the Task Force recommendation to introduce tamper resistant prescription pads. Purdue is committed to working with the medical and pharmacy associations, and to underwrite many of the costs associated with the introduction of tamper resist prescription pads for all narcotic prescriptions in Newfoundland. Prescription fraud - the alteration or forgery of a prescription – is a means by which drug abusers may illegally obtain narcotics and other controlled substances. The tamper proof pads contain multiple security features that will assist doctors and pharmacists identify and stop prescription fraud. Since the pads are recommended for all opioid prescriptions, not solely OxyContin, they will also help prevent diversion of other opioid containing products.

"We also look forward to further discussing the data (currently being collected and validated by the Task Force) on opioid use and abuse in Newfoundland, and will collaborate with this Task Force as it prepares its final report, scheduled to be delivered at the end of March."

Some utilization figures, for extended time periods, are provided in the interim report. In 2003, Purdue's shipments of OxyContin to Newfoundland increased by 38% over 2002 – which is less than the average Canada-wide increase.

Over the past decade, there has been a general increase in opioid prescriptions all across Canada. During this same period, most provinces have adopted guidelines for managing chronic pain. These guidelines clearly outline the potential benefit of opioid analgesics in selected patients suffering from chronic, severe pain. Increasing utilization may be due, in part, to increased awareness of these guidelines within the medical community. Mr. Stewart; "We must not forget that opioids, when used appropriately, help alleviate the pain of thousands of patients who otherwise would suffer, and that the number of patients who benefit from OxyContin far exceeds the number of individuals who abuse it."

Purdue Pharma is a privately held pharmaceutical company known for pioneering research on persistent pain and associated treatments. Since its introduction in 1996, OxyContin (a timed-release formulation of oxycodone) has offered pain relief to patients suffering from cancer and other types of chronic, disabling pain.

Copies of the Interim Report are available through the Department of Health and Community Services or on-line at <http://www.gov.nl.ca/health/publications/oxycontininterim/>.

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