

## **Inaction as Methadone Toll Rises**

By HARMD Inc.

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“We're most concerned that Methadone deaths in United States have risen 389.7% from 1999 to 2004, and that this epidemic is ongoing”, as heard from members who are building HARMD, Inc.'s multi-state data base.

Sadly, HARMD, Inc.'s petition against this hidden killer is all too busy with fresh signatures being added daily as more regular people enter into the nightmare that often accompanies the increased dissemination of this drug.

Methadone is used as replacement therapy for illicit opiate addictions, and can assist chronic pain sufferers. It is supposed to be tightly regulated on all fronts, but that is not the reality.

So what might happen when a cheap powerful drug is converted from medicinal use into a popular recreational drug?

Art Streppa from North Carolina knows first hand because when his son, Arran, bought liquid Methadone from a clinic patient, he was dead within hours.

In Warminster, PA Matthew Schalk was pursuant to this, arrested, and charged with 6 drug offenses after selling his take home doses to an undercover officer on 3 occasions, court records show.

"These take home doses are too freely entrusted to Methadone patients. When selling occurs, it hurts the integrity of the program and puts the community at risk ", notes Melissa Zuppari (HARMD, Inc., Director).

"We're disappointed that the allegedly lethal dealing activity of a local man, this menace who has continued to regularly offend, is still a welcome paying patient at a PA Methadone Clinic".

"This is like handing a convicted murderer a gun and telling him to play nicely from now on. It's giving credit where none is due", said Zuppari, Spokeswoman for HARMD Inc.

HARMD, Inc. is a National support organization of families who have lost a loved one to Methadone, and who advocate stricter regulations around the supply of Methadone and more consistent penalties for those caught selling this drug.

Martha (Marti) Hottenstein has been appointed the Diversion Specialist for HARMD, Inc. in light of

research indicating that much harm stems from a flood of the drug landing on our streets.

"Why is it our right to wake up in cold sweats knowing we must work the next day to pay more taxes to help support these clinics that aid and abet patients to go forth and kill our children?"

"The Methadone dealer has more rights than the victims," per all victim accounts.

Marti is concerned that "The police and SAMHSA don't seem to care about these deaths the way they would ones caused by recidivist drunk drivers".

Through her HARMD, Inc. work, she says she files cases daily from other families who lost their loved ones from this frequently occurring type of diversion and little is done to stop it.

A Maryland Study indicated that 10 percent of clinic drug is on-sold, a stunning quantity.

"Diversion is dangerous yet these killers continue recidivism". We'd not tolerate it from crack dealers, so the question must be asked as to why we let these Methadone dealers fly below the radar?" notes HARMD Inc.'s Diversion Specialist.

HARMD, Inc. says "it's unacceptable that in Streppa's case, the alleged Methadone dealer was not even arrested by police after his son's death".

"Where is the justice for my son being gone? Its business as usual in the clinics and on the streets for these people," Streppa rails. "In speaking with law enforcement this week, I was told they know what is going on in the clinics but they are constrained to do anything about it".

"I believe all of our members would like accountability from the authorities and the clinic hierarchy as to just what good that man's still holding a prescription is doing for society," says an incredulous Zuppari.

"Where are the rights for the families that buried their children and those who will tomorrow due to uncontrolled diversion?" asks Martha Hottenstein.

Most HARMD, Inc. mothers who have approached clinics to seek accountability are given short shrift. But this issue is not to just a few unlucky hysterical Moms getting vocal about a rare phenomenon.

PA figures just released to HARMD, Inc. reveal that in 2006, there were 325 deaths attributed to Methadone (not all counties have reported).

In North Carolina, there were 327 deaths (not all counties have reported).

"Each of these statistics represents a real and loved family member's death and don't think it can't happen to you, as bulletproof teens will often think they might get away with something just the one time," says Mary Haynes, Vice President of HARMD, Inc.

Although diversion appears to be the major cause of destruction of families by Methadone, about half of HARMD Inc.'s membership have lost someone who was prescribed Methadone under supervision of a Physician.

This is due to the drug's dangerous clinical profile, one that sets it apart from safer opiates like Morphine and even the Heroin it often replaces.

Special issues like a narrow window between therapeutic and fatal doses and the potential for cardio-toxicity in many users, mean that prescribers require a high level of training and skill.

Growing awareness of these problems is resulting in several major lawsuits being prepared. These may result in class action lawsuits against the manufacturers which have battled against stronger FDA warnings.

They've also taken no steps to prevent possible misrepresentation from groups of Methadone advocates, who claim the product is safe for all organs, when cardio-toxicity is established.

HARMD, Inc. helps to raise public awareness and is a strong advocate for stopping this carnage, as they appeal to the Government to make drastically needed changes in the way in which Methadone is prescribed and dosed.

Anyone interested in this issue is invited to view a petition, begun by HARMD, Inc.'s founding members, which aims to stop Methadone deaths via practical measures. The petition can be accessed at [www.HARMD.org](http://www.HARMD.org).

The story of Art Streppa's son and his demise as a result of Methadone is available on the website as well. Also included are many other unfortunate realties, recommended reading for all teens as even if they are not at risk, a friend might be.

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We are the families of victims and those yet to be victims of methadone. We have come together with other families throughout the United States who have lost loved ones to methadone. We would like to prevent any other family from the devastation we have experienced when our loved ones went to a doctor they trusted to relieve pain, went to a methadone clinic for help with an addiction, was given a "pain pill" from a trusted friend or just experimented with drugs.

Category	Drugs, Pharmaceuticals
Tags	methadone, drug abuse, addiction, opiate, opioid, north carolina, pennsylvania, substance abuse, drugs, overdose, death
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