

# HEALTH INNOVATION SERIES

## Evidence based recommendations to improve care delivery and outcomes

## Accidental prescribing of extended-release opioids

Errors with the prescribing of extended-release opioids in opioid-naïve patients have led to serious patient harm. These errors are number one in the Institute for Safe Medication Practices Top 10 Medication Errors and Hazards from 2020.

To avoid inadvertent selection of fentanyl patches, these should appear below other preparations or be differentiated in the drop-down menu. The example below shows how this can be done. The order sentence has the warning “Do NOT use on opioid naïve patients”. High risk medicine order sentences can be further differentiated using coloured font.

### Example: Order sentence display for fentanyl with information to avoid use of patches in opioid naïve patients

fentanyl  
 fentanyl 12 microg/hr transdermal modified release patch  
 fentanyl 12 microg/hr transdermal modified release patch  
     1 patch(es), Transdermal, 72 hourly, Modified Release, Persistent Pain, Do NOT use on opioid naïve patients  
 fentanyl 25 microg/hr transdermal modified release patch  
 fentanyl 25 microg/hr transdermal modified release patch  
     1 patch(es), Transdermal, 72 hourly, Persistent Pain, Do NOT use on opioid naïve patients  
 fentanyl 50 microg/hr transdermal modified release patch  
 fentanyl 50 microg/hr transdermal modified release patch  
     1 patch(es), Transdermal, 72 hourly, Modified Release, Persistent Pain, Do NOT use on opioid naïve patients  
 fentanyl 75 microg/hr transdermal modified release patch  
 fentanyl 75 microg/hr transdermal modified release patch  
     1 patch(es), Transdermal, 72 hourly, Modified Release, Persistent Pain, Do NOT use on opioid naïve patients  
 fentanyl 100 microg/hr transdermal modified release patch  
 fentanyl 100 microg/hr transdermal modified release patch  
     1 patch(es), Transdermal, 72 hourly, Modified Release, Persistent Pain, Do NOT use on opioid naïve patients  
 fentanyl additive  
 fentanyl additive microg, microg/kg/hr  
 fentanyl injection  
 fentanyl injection 0.5 microg/kg, IV Bolus, ONCE, Load: Analgesia  
 fentanyl nasal spray

### REFERENCES

1. Australian medicines handbook online [Internet]. Adelaide (AU): Australian Medicines Handbook Pty Ltd; 2022 [cited 2022 Mar 10]. Available from: <https://amhonline-amh-net-au/>
2. Start the Year Off Right by Preventing These Top 10 Medication Errors and Hazards from 2020 [Internet]. Horsham (PA): Institute for Safe Medication Practices; 2021 [cited 2022 Mar 10]. Available from: <https://ismpr.org/resources/start-year-right-preventing-these-top-10-medication-errors-and-hazards-2020>

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**Disclaimer:** These recommendations are based on issues identified during various programs of research undertaken by Macquarie University. They are not intended to be an exhaustive list and should be considered by individual care settings for appropriateness prior to implementation. A more detailed review of the issue and impact may also be warranted. The content of this document is intended for information purposes only.



### SYSTEM OPTIMISATION TIP #1

Change the display of opioid order sentences so that extended-release preparations are not listed first and/or are differentiated.

### SYSTEM OPTIMISATION TIP #2

Further actions may include:

- Default to the lowest initial starting dose and frequency on initiation
- Interactive decision support to confirm opioid tolerance