

Report on WHO Questionnaire for Review of Psychoactive Substances for the 37th ECDD: Evaluation of Acetylfentanyl

A total of 65 out of 100 countries answered the questionnaire for Acetylfentanyl. There were 61 countries which submitted the questionnaire answers through the online survey system. The remaining 4 countries submitted hardcopy answers to the Secretariat.

Of the responding countries, 14 countries had information on this substance.

LEGITIMATE USE

There are no approved medical products containing acetylfentanyl for human or veterinarian indications in any of the 14 responding countries.

Acetylfentanyl is currently being used in medical or scientific research in 2 countries, in one of which it is used as a reference standard.

Acetylfentanyl was not reported to be used for any cultural, religious or ceremonial purposes in 12 countries.

EPIDEMIOLOGY OF NON-MEDICAL/NON-SCIENTIFIC USE – USE FOR PSYCHOACTIVE PURPOSES OR RECREATIONAL DRUG USE

There were 6 countries that reported acetylfentanyl as being misused for its psychoactive properties (as a recreational drug). One country specified that opioid addicts are a subpopulation known to misuse acetylfentanyl. Common routes of administration are oral (2 countries), injection (1 country) and sniffing (2 countries). The most common formulation reported for non-medical/non-scientific purposes was powder (3 countries), followed by tablets (2 countries), liquid (1 country) and injectable (1 country) formulations. There was also one report of blotting paper being used as a formulation.

There were 3 countries which reported that the source of acetylfentanyl for non-medical/non-scientific use was via smuggling from other countries. Two countries commented that acetylfentanyl was also sourced over the internet through the parcel network.

The extent and magnitude of public-health problems or social harm from the use of acetylfentanyl was only discussed by 1 country, which stated that since 2013 the serious and substantial adverse effects due to acetylfentanyl toxicity have been reported in humans. There have been confirmed fatalities in which acetylfentanyl was a contributing factor and had occurred across different regions in the country.

Only one country reported that acetylfentanyl has been proven to produce dependence. The perception of negative health-impact originating from non-medical consumption was reported as either negligible (1 country), substantial (1 country) or serious (2 countries). For the countries that indicated a substantial or serious level of negative health-impact, they

specified that it was due to it being sold as heroin, along with the association of acetylfentanyl with a number of overdoses and deaths.

In one country there were 7 emergency room/department visits related to the non-medical use of acetylfentanyl (the only substance involved) in 2015. In regards to the mortality rate, data was provided by 2 countries. There was a total of 10 cases (year unknown) and 2 cases in 2015 as a result of acetylfentanyl use alone. The number of cases of death due to the use of acetylfentanyl in combination with other substances was reported to be 31 (year not available) and 18 (2015). A further 16 deaths have been associated with acetylfentanyl, however, it is unknown if other substances were involved.

STATUS OF NATIONAL CONTROL AND POTENTIAL IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL CONTROL

There were 8 countries which reported having acetylfentanyl currently controlled under national legislation. The legislation of the current control is based upon the medicines act (1 country), controlled substances act (7 countries), commodities Act (1 country) and finally another specific legislation for 1 country (controlled substance analogue). The scope of the controls includes production (6 countries), manufacturing (6 countries), export (5 countries), import (6 countries), distribution (7 countries), use (4 countries), possession (6 countries) and also possession with intent to supply (1 country). In one country the control is a temporary provision for two years (commenced July 2015), whereas in the remaining 5 countries it is not. Only one country reported having challenges with the implementation of controls, however, no specific details were provided.

Reported illicit activities involving acetylfentanyl include trafficking (2 countries), internet sales from abroad (2 countries), domestic internet sales (1 country) internet sales from unknown locations (2 countries) and finally sales to people who use this substance (1 country). There were two countries which completed the section on the number of seizures. The total number of seizures has increased from 9 to 280 (2013 to mid-2015).

There were 12 countries that reported that if acetylfentanyl were to be placed under international control it would have the capacity to enforce the control at a national level. There were 13 countries which identified that they would have the forensic laboratory capacity to analyse the substance.

Note on Questionnaire Analysis and Reports

An initial analysis of questionnaire answers (from 80 countries) was conducted on the 9th of November, to allow the preliminary reports to be prepared for the Expert Committee's consideration. These preliminary reports were made available on the website on the 12th of November. However, countries were provided the opportunity to continue to submit their answers until the 15th of December 2015. Following which, a final analysis of all submissions (from 100 countries) took place. This report summarises the final analysis of the questionnaires.