Simultaneous Incidence of Diaphragmatic Hernia and Intestinal Perforation in a Cat

Seyedsadra Izadi¹, Maryam Zabihi²,
Mohammad Sadegh Ghodrati³,
Mohammad Amin Reisdanaei¹,
Seyed Reza Ghiasi⁴

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BY THE AUTHOR**

Accidental fentanyl exposure in pets

Fiona Finlay¹, James Dunne²

1 Virgin care, Bath, United Kingdom
2 Wiltshire CCG, Devizes, United Kingdom

OBJECTIVES

Fentanyl is a highly potent opioid - accidental transdermal exposure resulting in fatalities has been reported in pets and children. Discussion of the topic prompted us to review the literature

METHODS

Literature review

RESULTS

- Many human patients are prescribed fentanyl – a 25 microgram/hour fentanyl patch is equivalent to an oral morphine dose of 60–90mg in 24 hours
- Discarded patches may still contain 50% of original drug – enough to cause serious harm/death

- Used patches should be disposed of carefully and not be put in a wastepaper bin where pets may find and ingest them - there is more than a 30-fold increase in absorption from the buccal mucosa if chewed compared with the transdermal route
- Swallowing an intact patch results in less rapid drug release compared with chewing, but systemic absorption is still significant
- Patches may also accidentally stick to an animal's skin
- Discarded patches should be folded putting the sticky sides of each patch together so that it sticks to itself. They should then be wrapped in paper or plastic before disposal
- Patients should check regularly that patch has not fallen off. May cover it with adhesive film to ensure it stays on
- Identifying signs of fentanyl exposure in animals is challenging as many are non-specific eg excitement, pacing, panting
- Police sniffer dogs are at risk of fentanyl exposure and in some forces dog handlers are trained in the administration of naloxone

STATEMENT (CONCLUSIONS)

Veterinary surgeons should ask about fentanyl exposure in pets where there are concerns re symptoms.

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