

March 26, 2018

## **Statement on the Use of Slow-Release Opioid Preparations in the Treatment of Acute Pain**

The Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA), which includes the Faculty of Pain Medicine (FPM), is committed to high standards of clinical practice in the fields of anaesthesia, perioperative medicine and pain medicine. As the education and training body responsible for the postgraduate training programs of anaesthesia and pain medicine for Australia, New Zealand and parts of Asia, ANZCA is committed to ongoing continuous improvement, promoting best practice and contributing to a high quality health system.

In conjunction with FPM, ANZCA's Safety and Quality Committee, which fosters safety and quality in patient care in anaesthesia, perioperative medicine and pain medicine, has developed a statement to assist practitioners in making informed decisions about the appropriate use of opioids in acute pain, with a particular focus on slow-release opioids.

ANZCA recognises that acute pain medicine is practised by all medical practitioners, not just anaesthetists and pain medicine specialists. Choosing an inappropriate formulation of opioid can happen for any patient, in any setting, under any medical practitioner.

Mounting evidence highlights the inappropriate use of slow-release opioids for the treatment of acute pain. The recommendations in this statement are in line with the approved indications for slow-release opioids listed by regulatory authorities including the TGA in Australia, Medsafe in New Zealand, and the FDA in the United States.

Coroners reports have found that regularly administered slow-release opioids added to a patient-controlled analgesia or as-needed opioid regimen can carry the same risk as adding an intravenous background infusion to patient-controlled analgesia – that is, increased risk of respiratory depression, better described as opioid-induced ventilatory impairment (OIVI). In these cases, sedation was often not recognised as an early sign of OIVI, especially when respiratory rate was within the “normal” range. This is especially true for opioid naive patients.

*ANZCA's Statement on the Use of Slow-Release Opioid Preparations in the Treatment of Acute Pain* is a statement of opinion designed to inform and recommend action. It

“To serve the community by fostering safety and high quality patient care in anaesthesia, perioperative medicine and pain medicine.”

was published in the March 2018 edition of the *ANZCA Bulletin* and is available on our [website](#).

We ask that you please disseminate this important ANZCA safety initiative in your publications, on your website and through your social media channels.

ANZCA and FPM are also keen to open dialogue with your college's members about the use of slow-release opioids in the treatment of acute pain and welcomes an opportunity to meet and discuss this statement, as we view the inappropriate use of slow-release opioids as a critical patient safety matter that relates to all areas of medicine

For further information please contact Jo-anne Chapman, General Manager Policy, Safety and Quality via email [policy@anzca.edu.au](mailto:policy@anzca.edu.au) or telephone + 61 3 8517 5341.

Yours sincerely



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