

Families touched by addiction battle new drug from hitting the market

Urge FDA to block ‘abuse resistant’ form of OxyContin

By Maureen Boyle

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BROCKTON —

Worried it could spawn another wave of young opiate addicts, the founder of a support group for families is urging the Federal Drug Administration to block a new version of OxyContin billed as “abuse resistant.”

“I don’t want to go to anymore funerals for a new drug,” said Joanne Peterson of Raynham, founder of Learn to Cope (learn2cope.org). “We already have had enough from OxyContin and heroin.”

Peterson joined a contingent of families this week in Washington, D.C., to testify before a FDA committee considering whether to approve the drug Remoxy, a gel-cap form of OxyContin.

The panel took an unofficial 11-8 vote in favor of Remoxy, and opponents of the drug say they hope the FDA will not follow the vote.

Remoxy, a controlled-release form of the painkiller oxycodone, is being touted as “abuse resistant” because it can’t be crushed and snorted, and it loses potency when combined with alcohol. Oxycodone is also the active ingredient of OxyContin, the highly addictive drug sold by Perdue Parma LP of Stamford, Conn., linked to the increase in heroin addiction in the region. Abusers crush or dissolve OxyContin to get around the time-release properties of that drug.

Peterson said drug abusers will also find a way to get around any “abuse resistant” properties of Remoxy — just as they have with other drugs, such as OxyContin and the fentanyl pain patch. Illegal drug users are chewing some fentanyl patches to bypass the time-release properties of the product, leading to some deaths.

“They are saying it is tamper-resistant and that’s it,” Peterson said. “We have seen this before. We are still dealing with the aftermath and continuing addiction with OxyContin. Given the history, why do we need another pain killer?”

Larry Golbom, host of the Florida radio show, “Prescription Addiction Radio Show: Breaking the Silence” (prescriptionaddictionradio.com), said there is no need for a new painkiller.

“I call it modern marketing, not modern medicine,” he said. “what they are doing is trying to promote another heroin-like substance under the auspices that it is more abuse resistant than OxyContin.”

He said the drug may not be able to be crushed but there have been no studies on whether heating the gel caps will break down any tamper-resistant properties.

The FDA is expected to complete its review of Remoxy next month.

The drug was developed by Pain Therapeutics Inc. of San Mateo, Calif., and is to be sold, if approved, by King Pharmaceuticals of Bristol, Tenn.

Attempts to reach a company official from Pain Therapeutics were unsuccessful.

Company officials have said studies have shown it is resistant to “common methods” of misuse and abuse.”

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