

[Back](#)

Article published Nov 8, 2008

Group seeks to end fatalities

LACONIA — The illegal sale and use of methadone and the deaths that often result have become a nationwide epidemic, said Marti Hottenstein, vice-president of an organization seeking more regulation of the drug, at the Laconia Police Station on Friday.

Hottenstein, of Helping America Reduce Methadone Deaths (HARMD), a national nonprofit organization formed several years ago, was in Laconia Friday to discuss her efforts to increase government regulation of methadone and to educate the public about its dangers.

Before the news conference, Lt. Chris Adams said the Laconia Police Department had invited Hottenstein to speak because of the growth in the illegal sale methadone in the Lakes Region and a spate of eight methadone-related deaths in Laconia last year.

So far this year, there has been one confirmed death and one unconfirmed, Adams said.

The city's one confirmed methadone death this year occurred in May with the victim being a 41-year-old male. Adams said the man's name is not being released and that the case is still under investigation. No charges have been filed but may be in the future, he added.

Hottenstein said she got involved with the organization after she found her son, Karl Hottenstein, 24, dead in his apartment on Oct. 22, 2006, after a methadone overdose.

She said he became addicted to prescription pain killers after being injured in a car accident. After seeking and being denied inpatient drug rehabilitation treatment, Hottenstein said, her son bought a methadone dose off a patient who was being treated at a clinic and he subsequently died.

Legally prescribed methadone doses are sometimes given to clinic patients when the clinic is closed on holidays and weekends. Often, the patients will divert some of their take-home doses to sell to others, which is illegal.

Hottenstein said she is trying to influence the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration, the organization that regulates Methadone clinics, to stop the practice of sending doses home with patients. She said methadone clinics should stay open seven days a week and on holidays so that all patients may receive their doses at the clinic.

Hottenstein cited Centers for Disease Control statistics that rate methadone as the second-deadliest drug in the country, next only to heroin.

According to CDC statistics, between 1999 and 2005, there have been 16,875 confirmed methadone deaths in the U.S.

"This is genocide; this is a problem and this needs to be fixed," Hottenstein said.

While the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration is the organization that oversees the methadone clinics, it is the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) that approves and regulates the use of methadone as a doctor-prescribed pain killer.

Hottenstein said she has and will continue to urge the FDA to make methadone a special classification drug, a designation that requires more regulation and stricter enforcement.

"If this drug can kill at therapeutic levels, then why isn't it regulated more closely?" Hottenstein asked. "That's the question the people of America need to ask the FDA and they deserve answers."

Hottenstein said the drug companies also must be held accountable for pushing for the approval of opiate-based pain medications such as oxycontin or oxycodone. People have become addicted to those, and methadone, which was originally only approved to help heroin addicts recover, is now used to treat addictions for other opiate-based drugs.

Robin Miller of Billerica, Mass., another member of Hottenstein's organization, also was at the news conference and emotionally spoke of how two people watched and did nothing as her 22-year-old son died from a methadone overdose on Jan. 14, 2006.

He was at his apartment in Dracut, Mass., with a girlfriend and the man who sold him his dose. Miller said apparently they told him to snort the drug, after which he went into respiratory distress and was foaming at the mouth.

Breaking into tears, Miller said the ordeal has destroyed her family.

"I have a 13-year-old son and I'm terrified [for him] because of what happened with my 22-year-old son," Miller said. "Something needs to be done. It's [methadone is] a legal killer."

Moyer said his department began taking apparent drug overdose cases much more seriously after the wave of eight methadone deaths in 2007.

Starting with one of the latter deaths, the death of Raymond Delucca, 20, of Laconia, on Oct. 23, 2007, Moyer said police began treating every overdose as a suspicious death and a crime scene, so that evidence would be preserved and witnesses questioned immediately so that culpability, if there is any, can be determined.

The Delucca case sparked the formation of an interagency task force and the man, Jeremy Copp, 20, of Laconia, who gave Delucca the drug was recently sentenced to serve five to 15 years in stat prison.

The man Copp bought the methadone from, Edward Costello, 55, formerly of 158B School St., Laconia, pleaded guilty in May to sale of a narcotic drug (methadone)-death resulting and was sentenced to 15-40 years in the New Hampshire State Prison. Costello's wife and daughter also were found culpable in Delucca's death and are serving lesser sentences.
