

Many Drug Companies Creating Abuse-Resistant Painkillers



More than a dozen drug companies are working on abuse-resistant painkillers, in the wake of the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) decision last month not to approve any generic versions of the original form of OxyContin.

The FDA also approved new labeling for a reformulated version of the drug, which will indicate it is more difficult to crush, and thus harder to abuse than the original version.

The original version of OxyContin could be crushed and then snorted or injected. OxyContin's manufacturer, Purdue Pharma, introduced a tamper-resistant formula in 2010.

The Wall Street Journal reports the FDA will consider the effectiveness of another painkiller, Opana ER.

If the FDA decides that drug deters abuse, it could help guard Opana's maker, Endo Pharmaceuticals, from competition, since generic painkillers are not tamper-resistant. That would provide extra incentive to create new painkillers that are resistant to abuse, the article notes. Opana turns into a jellylike substance when it is heated up for injection.

Pfizer has two potential new abuse-resistant drugs: Remoxy, which would compete with OxyContin, and Embeda, a morphine drug. Johnson & Johnson is testing an opioid drug that is tamper-resistant, while Purdue Pharma hopes to produce a hydrocodone drug that is resistant to abuse.

"Over time, it should be a scientific race across the whole pharmaceutical industry to create a market where all opioids have abuse-deterrent properties," Gary L. Stiles, Senior Vice President of Research and Development at Purdue Pharma, told the newspaper.

Smaller biotech companies are developing their own tamper-resistant formulas. One company has created pills that are so hard, that they chip a coffee grinder's blades when someone tries to use the device to break down the pills.

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Image courtesy of Join Together & The Partnership at Drugfree.org