

THE ACTIQ® AND FENTORA® ACCESS PROBLEM

The Problem

ACTIQ® and Fentora® are commercially formulated fentanyl products that dissolve under the tongue or in the inner side of the jaw ("buccal administration"). These products are simply the very best pain relief for many pain patients.

Fentanyl is often more effective than morphine or other related opioids. Unfortunately, fentanyl must be administered by injection, under the tongue, in the mouth, or by skin patch (Duragesic®). It is essentially ineffective if swallowed.

The problem has become one of cost. Many patients started on ACTIQ® several years ago when it cost was no more than \$3 to \$5 a dosage. This cost has progressively escalated in the past several years to the point that a single dosage may cost over \$50. Many patients who started on ACTIQ® when it was relatively inexpensive can no longer obtain it because their insurance plan will simply say "No". I have observed numerous patients who took several dosages a day and led normal, productive lives who now have returned to an impaired, painful state. Be clearly advised, that for many patients there is no opioid pain reliever that will substitute and give the same relief as fentanyl.



Here are my recommended solutions for pain patients who can't get ACTIQ® or Fentora®, but still need fentanyl.

Solution No. 1

If you are a patient who can no longer obtain ACTIQ® or Fentora®, your doctor can submit a special request or "prior authorization" to your insurance company. Insurance companies routinely turn patients down using the excuse that ACTIQ® and Fentora® are only indicated for cancer pain, but it's really a cost issue. When ACTIQ® was inexpensive this wasn't a problem because a physician can prescribe any prescription drug for any clinical purpose that he deems to be indicated.

Solution No. 2

A "compounding" pharmacy can make an under-the-tongue fentanyl product often called "troche". Likely, your physician will know of a compounding pharmacy near you. Lately, I've observed that many compounding pharmacies only reduce their prices or costs slightly less than ACTIQ® or Fentora®, because they know that fentanyl is the very best pain reliever for many patients, and so they want to gouge the patient.

Solution No. 3

Some patients who can no longer get ACTIQ® or Fentora® are able to do the following with good results.

1. Use a fentanyl patch (Duragesic®)
2. Supplement the patch with Ethoxydose® which is a liquid that is placed under the tongue with a dropper.

Solution No. 4

Your doctor can prescribe liquid fentanyl concentrate, and you can simply make your own "under-the-tongue" fentanyl preparation. With an allergy syringe place 2 to 7 drops on a candy or on a piece of cotton. The favorite candy is "Smartie". The candy or cotton is placed under the tongue or in the side of the mouth just like ACTIQ® or Fentora®. Some patients believe this method is equal or even more effective than ACTIQ® or Fentora®. Others think it is not quite as effective.

Although there are many sources to purchase fentanyl concentrate, I order from: Anazao Health in Tampa, Florida.

Anazao Health
5710 Hoover Blvd.
Tampa, Florida
800-995-4363
Fax: 800-985-4363

At this time, insurance companies are not accustomed to paying for fentanyl concentrate, and few physicians are aware of this off-label opportunity and availability. The cost of making an oral dose of fentanyl concentrate is less than \$5.

At this time I know of no other solutions.