

TRAMADOL

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NON-SCHEDULED, PRESCRIPTION PAIN RELIEVER A POTENTIAL PROBLEM

Tramadol, was approved as a non-controlled analgesic in 1995 (under the name Ultram®) as a treatment for moderate to moderately severe pain in adults. Initially, there was limited labeling on the product about abuse potential, and many doctors prescribed this medication freely.

Currently, many law enforcement officials are beginning to question why this medication is not a scheduled drug, along with various pharmacists and medical personnel. A publication by the Drug Enforcement Administration, Office of Diversion Control (September 2007) listed Tramadol as a "drug of concern."¹ According to the information provided by the DEA, Ultram may induce physical dependence of the morphine-type. Following encouragement by the FDA, labeling of this drug contains language to indicate potential dependence/abuse, including drug-seeking behavior and illicit actions to obtain the drug, not limited to persons with prior history of opiate dependence. Package labeling now expresses craving/

tolerance development is possible.

Officers in the Louisville Metro (KY) area have reported what is becoming daily encounters with pharmacists and doctors regarding the need for Tramadol to be a scheduled drug. A pharmacy in Hazard, Kentucky reports Tramadol to be one of the most sought after medications in their area other than Loratab/Loracet. Personnel there responded to the mention of Tramadol with: "Why is it not a controlled substance!?" also claiming that the pharmacy has requests up to 2 weeks early from persons wanting their prescriptions in advance.

Documentation continues to suggest the high potential of abuse for this drug on the streets. As it stands, Johnson & Johnson, who manufactures the drug, are fighting regulations that would schedule this product as a controlled substance.



Some law enforcement officials are beginning to recognize and document Tramadol to be widely abused. Information gathered from various LEAs in Kentucky have expressed Ultram/Ultracet to be the drug of choice for many abusers, but due to its current status as a non-controlled substance, state it is hard to pursue criminally.



Facts of Interest:

- Tramadol is most commonly abused by narcotic addicts, chronic pain patients, and health professionals.
- From initial marketing in 1995 through September 2004, the FDA received 766 case reports of Tramadol abuse and 482 cases of withdrawal associated with the drug.
- Tramadol is not considered a controlled substance in many countries and is available with a normal prescription. Sweden, as of May 2008, has chose to classify Tramadol as a controlled substance.

To see complete listing of Tramadol's Legal Status in various countries, visit:

http://www.erowid.org/pharms/tramadol/tramadol_law.shtml

1: DEA, Office of Diversion Control, http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drugs_concern/tramadol.htm