

Overdose Deaths Soared to 70,000 Deaths last Year, Yet FDA Approves New Painkiller that Is 1000 Times More Powerful than Morphine

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The FDA approved a powerful new opioid painkiller called Dsuvia that's 10 times stronger than fentanyl, the deadly synthetic opioid that's been blamed for the record number of drug overdose deaths recorded in 2017, and 1,000 times more powerful than morphine. The potential that the drug will be diverted and abused is likely. The FDA ignored the objections of lawmakers and its own advisory committee in the process. AcelRx, the manufacturer of Dsuvia, anticipates \$1.1 billion in annual sales, and hopes to have its product in hospitals early next year. Public health risks pale in comparison to the enormous profits that the company stands to reap from sales.

Purdue Pharma and other pioneers of powerful opioid painkillers probably felt a twinge of regret on Friday when the FDA approved a powerful new opioid painkiller that's 10 times stronger than fentanyl – the deadly synthetic opioid that's been blamed for the record number of drug overdose deaths recorded in 2017 – and 1,000 times more powerful than morphine, ignoring the objections of lawmakers and its own advisory committee in the process.

After all that trouble that purveyors of opioids like Purdue and the Sackler family went to in order to win approval –**doctoring internal research** and suborning doctors to convince the FDA to approve powerful painkillers like OxyContin despite wildly underestimating the drug's abuse potential – the agency might very well have approved those drugs any way? And opioid makers might have been able to avoid some of the legal consequences stemming from this dishonesty, like the avalanche of lawsuits brought by state AGs.

What's perhaps even more galling is that the FDA approved the drug after official data showed 2017 was the deadliest year for overdose deaths in US history, with more than

70,000 recorded drug-related fatalities, many of which were caused by powerful synthetic opioids like the main ingredient in Dsuvia, the brand name under which the new painkiller will be sold.

Dsuvia is a 3-millimeter tablet of sufentanil made by AcelRx. It's a sublingual tablet intended to provide effective pain relief in patients for whom most oral painkillers aren't effective. The FDA's advisory committee voted 10-3 to recommend approval of the drug, a decision that was accepted by the FDA on Friday. The agency justified its decision by insisting that Dsuvia would be subject to "very tight" restrictions.

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