



OHIO EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES



Robert L. Wagoner, Executive Director
www.ems.ohio.gov

Ohio

**Department of
Public Safety**



Mike DeWine, Governor

Thomas J. Stickrath, Director

Jon Husted, Lt. Governor

Robert L. Wagoner, Executive Director

To: Ohio EMS providers, EMS agencies, and EMS medical directors
From: Carol A. Cunningham, M.D., FAAEM, FAEMS
State Medical Director
Date: April 21, 2022
RE: **Nitazenes: The New Synthetic Opioids**

The opioid crisis continues to plague our nation, including the State of Ohio, with fentanyl and its associated high potency significantly adding to the rates of death. Unfortunately, a new class of synthetic opioids, nitazenes, has recently been identified through autopsy findings and forensic crime lab analyses.

Due to the emergence of nitazenes, the State of Ohio Board of Pharmacy emergency scheduled seven nitazenes as Schedule I controlled substances on April 6, 2022, due to their imminent danger to public health, welfare, and safety. The emergency scheduling is currently effective for 180 days, but may become more prolonged or permanent in the future. Schedule I controlled substances have no medicinal purposes, and those found in possession or selling these substances will face heightened criminal charges.

The nitazenes that have been emergency scheduled are butonitazene, etodesnitazene, flunitazene, metonitazene, metodesnitazene, N-pyrrolidino etonitazene, and protonitazene. Of note, metonitazene and protonitazene is 1.5 to 10 times more potent than fentanyl. The potency of N-pyrrolidino etonitazene is 20 times greater than fentanyl. EMS

medical directors are advised to consider creating avenues within their local EMS protocols where naloxone can be administered in larger and/or more frequent doses particularly in regions of Ohio where the county coroner's office or forensic crime laboratories have seen an increase in nitazenes. At a minimum, all EMS providers should be prepared and skilled to provide adequate airway management to patients with prolonged periods of respiratory depression due to nitazenes.

Thank you for your dedicated service to the residents and visitors of Ohio as we face this additional challenge in the practice of EMS medicine.

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