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Interim Chief Coroner's Alert to Ontario Physicians and Pharmacists

To: Members of CCFP, CPSO, OMA, and OCP

From: Dr. Dan Cass, Interim Chief Coroner for Ontario

Subject: Lethal consequences from the recreational use of the antidepressant bupropion (Wellbutrin[®]; Zyban[®]) through inhalation and/or injection

Dr. Dan Cass is alerting Ontario physicians, particularly family physicians, emergency physicians, psychiatrists, as well as pharmacists, of the potential lethal consequences of the recreational use of bupropion through atypical routes.

The Office of the Chief Coroner is aware of at least six cases in which the recreational use of bupropion by inhalation or injection was a causative factor in the death. In these cases, bupropion was injected or inhaled alone or in combination with other illicit or prescribed drugs. Injection use may be associated with significant tissue necrosis at the injection site, leading to death in some cases.

A public safety risk appears to be emerging. Physicians and pharmacists should be aware of the potential for recreational use of bupropion via inhalation or injection when considering prescribing and/or dispensing this medication, and when treating patients presenting with complications of use via these atypical routes.

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