



# Yolo County Health & Human Services Agency



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To: Yolo County - Paramedics  
From: John S, Rose, MD, FACEP  
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Subject: Opioid Shortage in Yolo County

## Memorandum

As you are all aware, there has been a national shortage of many common medications over the past several years. These shortages are experienced around the country by EMS systems and hospitals alike. The reason for these shortages is complex and generally multifactorial. Recently, there has been a significant challenge in acquiring fentanyl from regional suppliers. This shortage has hurt several local EMS systems as well as many hospitals. We are currently experiencing a significant shortage of fentanyl in our county. Although we believe this to be short term issue, it is real and may become a chronic issue over time. We have been in communication with the AMR leadership and medical director regarding this issue.

That said, I want to direct each of you to be very mindful of your use of parenteral opioids and not to forget other adjuncts to help relieve pain. I have had to adjust my own practice in the use of parental opioids for patients due to the chronic shortages of all narcotics in emergency departments in the region. I would like to leave you with a few tips I have adopted.

- Use parenteral opioids for severe, acute pain not relieved by other measures. We all have a tendency to want to treat all pain, no matter the source, very aggressively. It is important to understand that all painful conditions do not require ALS pain management. Conditions such as STEMI, polytrauma with long bone fractures, and burns are areas where ALS pain management and parenteral opioids are clearly clinically indicated. Many other conditions likely do not require an opioid during transport. Use your skill and judgement in deciding when to administer parenteral opioids.
- Use effective BLS skills to relieve pain. Splinting, positioning, compression, and ice, when available, are helpful for many conditions.
- AMR Personnel, AMR has distributed a document entitled *Pain Management Clinical Practice Recommendation*. This has several important principles that may help in this regard.
- A person's pain response is variable and complex. Effective communication with support and understanding goes a long way to helping patients in pain. Effective opioid stewardship is also important for all of us to practice.

We are in the process of authorizing intravenous acetaminophen for ALS units. This will be an effective alternative and adjunct to other parenteral analgesics.