

FENTANYL PRESS GUIDE

I believe in the power of the press.

During my lifetime I have witnessed the power of the press to change terminology associated with mental health, race, gender identity, cultures, substance abuse disorder, pronouns, and who one can love.

It is time for the press to once again use their power to apply accurate terminology to describe the cause of death for marginalized fentanyl victims.

Fentanyl victims' families and allies respectfully request the press begin using the phrases **fentanyl poisoning** or **fentanyl toxicity** to describe the victim's cause of death in place of the word 'overdose.'

Why is this important?

Stigma is attached to the word overdose. For a dead person to be labeled by the term overdose is to stigmatize them. Once stigmatized the efforts to investigate their death changes. It changes efforts of law enforcement, judicial branch prosecutors, elected officials' development of laws, public health policy makers program development and life insurance companies' payout decisions.

The word overdose does not accurately record the fact that fentanyl deaths are caused by deception. Using the layman phrase 'put to sleep like a dog' is more accurate than the term overdose.

Dr. Padma Gular accurately described many people/victims are unaware fentanyl is in a product they ingested, then they die. That is not an overdose, it is a poisoning. They did not intentionally ingest fentanyl. Unfortunately, the dead person cannot testify they were deceived because they are dead!

Overdose is a generalized term applied to any medication/illicit drug death. It is used because it is easy. It is used because that is what society has always done. It is used because we live in a lazy society that likes to label and sort victims into categorial boxes with judgements attached.

A year ago, I did not know the difference, then my daughter Sophia died. I know the difference now, and so do the 106,000 families and their allies who have been affected by a fentanyl death.

Words matter. Terminology matters. Fentanyl victims' matter. That is why we are calling on the press to do their job and to change the words they use to describe fentanyl victims cause of death.

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