

**PALM BEACH COUNTY  
SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

RIC L. BRADSHAW, SHERIFF



The Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office is concerned about the escalating number of drug overdose deaths related to methadone use. Methadone (a Schedule II Controlled Substance) can be a safe and effective drug when taken as prescribed. Overdose deaths may result from intentional abuse and accidental misuse of this powerful synthetic opioid analgesic. According to recent data, methadone related deaths increased 390 percent from 1999 through 2004. The Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) reported 716 deaths caused by methadone in 2006.\*

In November 2006, the FDA issued the following public health advisory relative to methadone, "Prescribing methadone is complex. Methadone should only be prescribed for patients with moderate to severe pain when their pain is not improved with other non-narcotic pain relievers. Pain relief from a dose of methadone lasts about 4 to 8 hours. However, methadone stays in the body much longer, from 8 to 59 hours after it is taken. As a result, patients may feel the need for more pain relief before the methadone is gone from the body. Methadone may build up in the body to toxic levels if taken too often, if the amount is too high, or if it is taken with certain other medications or supplements."



## **BE AWARE:**

Methadone can be particularly dangerous when combined with alcohol, sedatives or other prescription drugs.

Patients who are prescribed methadone need to be monitored and counseled by a physician well trained in the unique properties of this drug.

Used improperly, concentrations of the methadone can accumulate in the body resulting in toxicity.

Additional information regarding this issue can be obtained by visiting <http://www.pbs0.org>

\*Information taken from:  
Methadone Diversion, Abuse, and Misuse:  
Deaths Increasing at Alarming Rate.  
(November, 2007), US Justice Department:  
<http://www.usdoj.gov/>  
Document ID: 2007-Q0317-001