

# News

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November 20, 1987

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\*\*\*\* New drug is safe and cost-effective  
for short day-surgery procedures.

DALLAS--A new drug that may cut hospital costs by increasing the number of out-patient surgical procedures is now available for use. The painkiller, alfentanil, has unique chemical properties that make it an effective, affordable alternative to common narcotics. The anesthetic is ideally suited for short day-surgery procedures because it takes effect quickly and wears off quickly after surgery.

Dr. Scott Wansbrough, assistant professor of anesthesiology at The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas and attending anesthesiologist at Parkland Memorial Hospital, says, "I anticipate alfentanil will revolutionize traditional concepts of day surgery." He spent nearly a year researching the effectiveness and possible hazards of alfentanil prior to its recent Food and Drug Administration approval.

Alfentanil is most effective in operating procedures lasting between 30 minutes and one hour. Common procedures include some gynecological and urological surgeries.

Alfentanil is considered a better drug for short surgeries because it takes effect quickly, can be precisely controlled during surgery and wears off in a matter of minutes. It therefore can be very cost-effective for both the patient and hospital by allowing certain surgical procedures to be completed during the day and avoiding an admission to a hospital bed overnight. "Many procedures that traditionally required an overnight stay in the hospital can be completed in the day-surgery unit," Wansbrough says.

The control available with alfentanil is especially valuable when working with elderly patients. Wansbrough says, "Special precautions need to be taken with elderly patients because many of them have some degree of cerebrovascular and/or coronary artery disease. Controlling these patients' blood pressures and heart rates is vital and can be easily accomplished with alfentanil."

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Note: The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas comprises Southwestern Medical School, Southwestern Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and Southwestern Allied Health Sciences School.