



PROVIDER ALERT



Alert #2 2-9-2016 HCAD, HCAL, HCBI, HCBK, HCCH, HCCK, HCEB, HCLC, HCNB, HCNC, HCYO

Prescription of Naloxone

Despite the continued increase of overdose deaths due to opioids in Pennsylvania, less than 1% of our members who received drug & alcohol services between January 1, 2015 through June 30, 2015 were issued a prescription for naloxone. We understand that some individuals receive naloxone samples directly, but are concerned that this percentage is very low. Naloxone (Narcan®) is an opioid antagonist indicated for partial or complete reversal of opioid depression induced by natural or synthetic opioids. It is FDA-approved to treat suspected or known acute opioid overdose.

In response, **Community Care is asking our providers to ensure that members who are using opiates or have an opioid use disorder are offered a prescription for naloxone unless they already have the medication.** In addition, please offer education to members and family members about the use of this medication. Assessment of the efficacy of our work together will be monitored so that we can enhance our impact. We understand that there are practical challenges in improving the prescription fill rate for naloxone, including lack of access to the medication at pharmacies in some regions. The information provided below may offer some assistance in addressing those issues and in the spring of 2016, Community Care will be offering regional meetings to discuss possible strategies to provider challenges.

Act 139 was signed into law in September 2014. Act 139 allows first responders including law enforcement, EMS, or fire fighters the ability to administer naloxone to individuals experiencing an opioid overdose. The law also allows individuals who may themselves be at risk of an overdose obtain a prescription for naloxone, as well as, friends or family members that may be in a position to assist a person at risk of experiencing an opioid related overdose. Additionally, Act 139 provides immunity from civil, criminal, or professional liability for anyone who prescribes or administers naloxone. Act 139 provides protection from prosecution for drug possession for those who report an overdose, as well as, protection from prosecution for the person who has overdosed¹.

In order to ensure that individuals at risk, family members, or friends had access to naloxone if unable to obtain it from a health care professional, Dr. Rachel Levine, Pennsylvania Physician General, issued a standing order for naloxone on October 28, 2015. This standing order is kept on file at some pharmacies but can be downloaded from the Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs website: http://www.ddap.pa.gov/overdose/Pages/Naloxone_FAQ.aspx. The website also provides a list of several pharmacies throughout the state that routinely stock naloxone; guidance toolkits for first responders, as well as toolkits for family and friends; information on frequently asked questions about naloxone and other resources and instructional materials².

¹Act 139 of 2014. *Pennsylvania Department of Health*. Available at <http://www.health.pa.gov/My%20Health/Diseases%20and%20Conditions/A-D/Pages/Act-139-of-2014.aspx> Accessed November 24, 2015.

²Naloxone FAQ. *Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs*. Available at http://www.ddap.pa.gov/overdose/Pages/Naloxone_FAQ.aspx. Accessed November 24, 2015.

To help educate the medical community, Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic and Alice Bell, coordinator for the overdose prevention project at Prevention Point Pittsburgh, developed a webinar on the role of naloxone in overdose prevention. The webinar provides an overview of overdose deaths, possible strategies focusing on harm reduction, the use of naloxone, training for lay people and discusses practical and legal issues related to naloxone. If interested, the webinar can be accessed through the following link:

<http://medicalmedia.upmc.com/webtraining/wpic/oerp/oerp022515/>.

In addition, SAMHSA just released an updated version of the Opioid Overdose Toolkit. It is designed to educate first responders, physicians, patients, family members, and community members on ways to prevent opioid overdose and is available at the following link:

<http://store.samhsa.gov/product/Opioid-Overdose-Prevention-Toolkit-Updated-2016/SMA16-4742>

Other educational materials, including training videos, can be found at the following websites:

- Online Continuing Education Program for physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, nurses, and pharmacists:
http://www.opioidprescribing.com/naloxone_module_1-landing
- Trainings for patients and family members on how to administer naloxone:
<http://prescribetoprevent.org/patient-education/videos/>
- Information on how to write prescriptions:
<http://prescribetoprevent.org/prescribers/palliative/>
- Additional website to find a pharmacy that stocks naloxone:
<http://www.overdosefreepa.pitt.edu/find-naloxone/>
- How to start a naloxone program, including training tools and videos:
<http://www.naloxoneinfo.org/run-program/start-program>