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JOINT REGULATORY STATEMENT
Prescription of Naloxone to High-Risk Individuals
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This statement provides information concerning the prescription of Naloxone to individuals at high-risk of an opioid overdose. This statement is only intended to provide an overview. Prior to prescribing naloxone, prescribers should seek detailed information regarding risk factors for opioid overdose, the use of naloxone, and the laws and rules regulating prescribers in Ohio, i.e., physicians, physician assistants and advanced practice registered nurses with a certificate to prescribe.

This statement should not be construed as legal or health care advice, but as information intended to increase the awareness and knowledge of authorized prescribers, pharmacists and the public about the use of naloxone to prevent or reverse the effects of opioids. Prescribers should seek legal counsel if clarification or legal advice is needed.

Background

Preventing Drug Overdoses

From 1999 to 2010, Ohio's death rate due to unintentional drug overdoses increased 372 percent. Due to the alarming increase in drug overdose deaths, the Governor's Cabinet Opiate Action Team, the Prescription Drug Abuse Action Group (PDAAG), Project DAWN (Deaths Avoided with Naloxone) and Ohio's professional licensing boards are working toward ways to enhance professional awareness and educate licensees regarding additional ways we can all contribute to saving lives, especially when faced with meeting the formidable challenge of treating opiate abuse and addiction. This statement is intended to raise awareness about the benefits of naloxone (Narcan™) for individuals at high-risk of opioid overdose.

Naloxone is a medication primarily used to prevent or reverse the effects of opioids, including respiratory depression, sedation and hypotension. When administered during an overdose, naloxone blocks the effects of opioids on the brain to restore effective breathing. In the presence of physical dependence on opioids, naloxone will induce withdrawal symptoms. Emergency medical professionals have safely used naloxone with patients for over 40 years. Naloxone is not known to produce tolerance or cause physical or psychological dependence in patients. A contraindication for naloxone use is in patients who are known to be hypersensitive to the medication.

Prescribing Considerations

Prescribing Naloxone

Naloxone can be legally prescribed by a physician, physician assistant, or advanced practice registered nurse who is an Ohio authorized prescriber for patients who present a high-risk for opioid overdose, after the patient is evaluated by the prescriber who determines the patient would benefit from the prescription for naloxone. When prescribed, indications for and methods of administration should be explained to patients, along with any potential risks.

Personally Furnishing Naloxone to a Patient

“Personally furnish” means the distribution of drugs by a prescriber to the prescriber’s patients for use outside the prescriber’s practice setting. In Ohio, only physicians are authorized to personally furnish naloxone. Physician assistants and advanced practice registered nurses are not authorized to personally furnish naloxone.

Providing Naloxone to a Third-Party

Authorized prescribers may not prescribe or personally furnish naloxone to an individual for the purpose of encouraging the individual to distribute or administer the medication to others.

Risk Factors, Education, and Naloxone Prescription Programs

Risk factors for Opioid Overdose

Patients with the risk factors below may be in danger of an opioid overdose. These risk factors may be indicators for prescribing or personally furnishing naloxone. The factors include, but are not limited to:

- Recent medical care for opioid poisoning/intoxication/overdose
- Participant in a medical regime designed to provide Medication-Assistance Treatment for opioid addiction
- Suspected or confirmed history of heroin or nonmedical opioid use
- High-dose opioid prescription (≥ 80 mg/day morphine equivalence)
- Any Methadone prescription for opioid-naive patient
- Recent release from jail or prison with a history of opioid abuse
- Recent release from mandatory abstinence program or drug detoxification program
- Enrollment in Methadone or buprenorphine detoxification or maintenance program (for either addiction or pain management)
- Any opioid prescription and known or suspected:
 - Smoking, COPD, emphysema, asthma, sleep apnea, or other respiratory disease
 - Renal or hepatic disease
 - Alcohol use
 - Concurrent benzodiazepine use or any concurrent sedating medication use

- Concurrent antidepressant prescription
- Remoteness from or difficulty accessing medical care
- Voluntary patient request for naloxone, or any other factor that makes the patient at high-risk for opioid overdose.

Education

Individuals receiving naloxone should be advised of the following:

- Overdose prevention techniques
- Recognizing signs and symptoms of overdose
- Calling 911
- Airway and breathing assessment/Rescue breathing/Recovery position
- Naloxone storage, carrying, and administration in an emergency situation
- Reporting of overdose and refill procedures
- Post-overdose follow-up care

Naloxone Prescription Programs

Naloxone Prescription Programs (NPPs), which provide overdose training and take-home doses of intranasal naloxone to high-risk patients, can be effective at saving lives. According to a recent report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, since 1996, 53,032 individuals have been trained by NPPs resulting in 10,171 overdose reversals using naloxone. In addition to providing naloxone for administration in cases when medical help is not immediately available, NPPs provide training in recognizing the signs and symptoms of an overdose, instruction on how to perform rescue breathing and the importance of calling 911.

Summary

Due to the alarming increase in drug overdose deaths, state agencies, private entities, and Ohio's professional licensing boards are working toward ways to enhance professional awareness and education regarding the prescription and use of naloxone. This statement is an overview intended to raise awareness about the benefits of naloxone for individuals at high-risk of opioid overdose. We encourage licensees to learn more about NPPs, such as Project DAWN, and the use of the prescription of naloxone for persons at high-risk of an opioid drug overdose. For additional information please refer to <http://www.healthyohioprogram.org/vipp/drug/ProjectDAWN.aspx>.