

Narcan Certification Training: Clinton Family Health Center

Working Paper #CLEANING 2018-02
January 2018



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Background

Opioids are highly addictive, and can have severe consequences and risks with use, including overdose and death. The medication Naloxone is also a powerful medication, and can reverse an overdose and prevent death. Narcan is the brand name for the medication Naloxone, and is used in the case of an opioid or heroin overdose to reverse the effects of opioids. Narcan is delivered in one of two methods – intranasal (See Figure 2) or intramuscular (See Figure 3) – and blocks the opioid receptors, essentially blocking the effects of opioid drugs, and restoring respiration (NIDA, 2016).

One site that offers Narcan Certification Training in Rochester is the Clinton Family Health Center. Trainings here are held on the first Friday of every month. On November 3, 2017 the training was given by a Social Worker and a Medical Assistant, the turnout for this session was greater than average, thirteen attendees, whereas the typical attendance has been 5-10 individuals. Several members of the Center for Public Safety Initiatives (CPSI) attended the Narcan Certification Training at the Clinton Family Health Center on November 3, 2017.

The Training

The training was scheduled for an hour, and the agenda included an instructional video, a question-and-answer session, visual displays of the Narcan kits, and distribution of these kits. The ten minute

informational video shown can be accessed through YouTube, and covered several topics including risk factors for an overdose, signs of an overdose, and how to prepare and administer Narcan to an individual suffering an overdose.

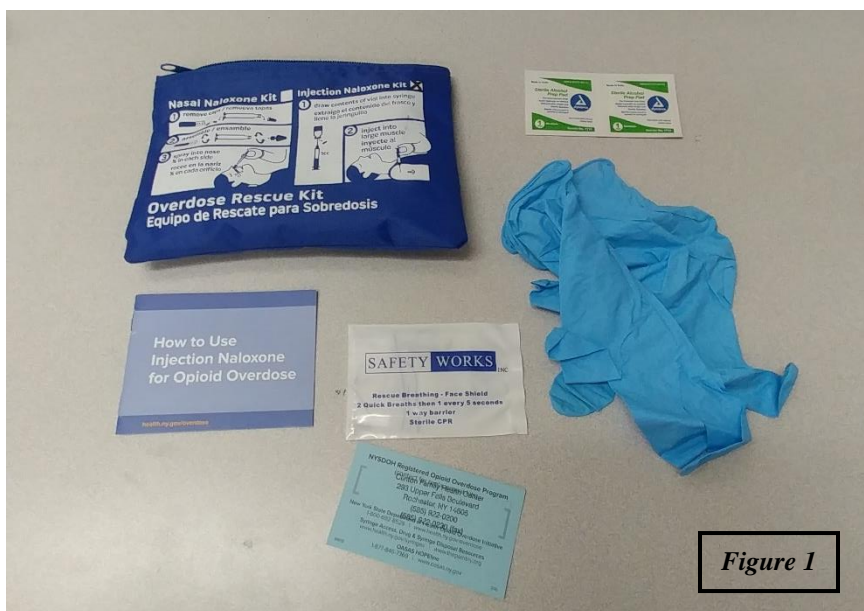


Figure 1

The video described a number of risk factors for an overdose include mixing drugs or types of drugs, which could include using drugs laced with other substances or using drugs alone, as an overdose can happen over the course of one to three hours after use. Finally, if an individual has been incarcerated, or in a similar situation for a period of time, their tolerance for drugs will diminish. It is possible that many drug users do not know this, or do not believe this, and will continue to use the same dose (or higher) than they had before the period of abstinence.

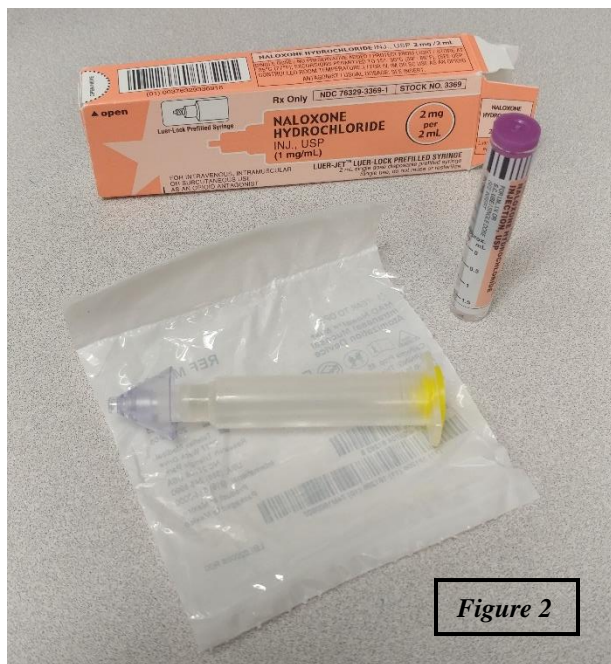
Next, the video discussed several common signs of a drug overdose and how they may present as other problems as well. If the individual calling the emergency service line reports that someone has overdosed, then there will be many specific questions that follow to understand the situation. If the caller does not have the specific information (i.e., the type and amount of drugs used, when the drugs were used, etc.) it may be easier to describe the symptoms to the operator. The individual may not be breathing, or has very shallow breathing; they may be discolored, or appear blue, especially their lips; the individual may also make gurgling noises, as if they are trying to breathe, or their throat is blocked.

The next segment of the training consisted of the instructors fielding questions from the audience; the audience was very attentive and inquisitive, and the staff were eager and clear in their responses to everyone. In the event that a certified Narcan administrator encounters a person who seems to be overdosing, and presents the symptoms, an attendee questioned if it will harm the individual to administer Narcan if they are not actually overdosing. The answer is no; Narcan blocks the opioid receptors in the brain, but does not deliver any kind of other drugs to the system. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse [NIDA], Narcan is quite safe, and only has noticeable effects on an individual who has opioids in their system (NIDA, 2016). Further, Narcan will only remain in a person's system for 30 to 90 minutes. Other questions were specific to the Narcan kits, which will be described below.

Perhaps one of the most important points that was stressed to trainees was how the person will respond coming out of an overdose. They will likely exhibit negative responses, including anger or aggression for disrupting the euphoric effect associated with their high. Narcan administration may produce withdrawal symptoms, such as rapid heart rate, tremors and vomiting, and it may help to roll the individual

into their side. The trainers stressed that you should remain with the individual until Emergency Medical Services respond, and encourage them to go to the hospital. In staying with the individual, it is also pertinent to avoid letting them use more drugs at this time. Narcan may not last as long in the individual's system as the opioids will, as mentioned above that the medication can last for 30-90 minutes; remaining with an individual is important because it may be necessary to administer additional doses later on.

The training also described the Good Samaritan Law and its implications. "To encourage people to seek out medical attention for an overdose or for follow-up care after naloxone has been administered,



40 states and the District of Columbia have enacted some form of a Good Samaritan or 911 drug immunity law." (NCSL, 2017). This provides immunity from arrest, charges or prosecution for possession of drugs, controlled substances, or other drug paraphernalia. In other words, if you are with someone who begins to overdose, and you have drugs with you or have been using yourself, you will not face criminal sanctions. One situation that may result in arrest is if the individual calling 911 has a

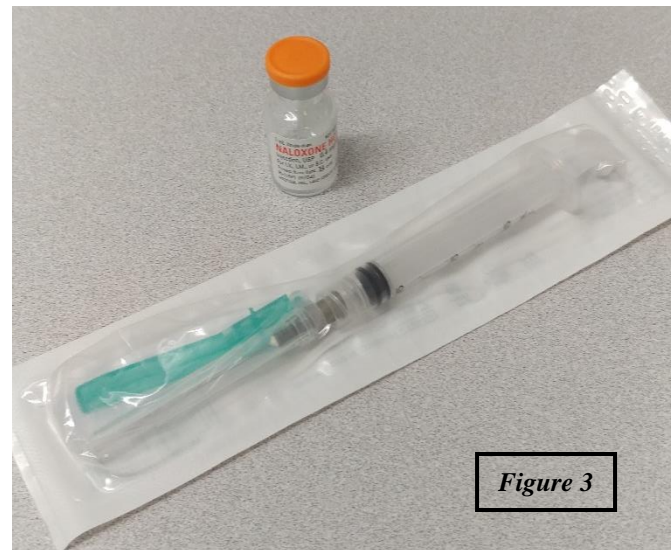
warrant. Overall, the instructors argued that it is critical to call 911 in an overdose situation to save the life of the individual suffering an overdose.

The Kit

After completing the training portion, participants were now certified to administer Narcan, and everyone left with a kit (see Figure 1). Training participants were given the option to take either method of administration; intranasal (Figure 2) or intramuscular (Figure3). Both methods are equally effective, the options simply depend on the comfort level of each person. The intramuscular kit is delivered through a syringe, and can be inserted through clothing, as one participant clarified with the instructors. The nasal kit is delivered into the nostrils, similar to any over-the-counter nasal spray.

The two types of kits have similar contents, with the exception of the administration instruments. All kits contain instructions for administration, a brief reminder of the training, and the certification cards. Also, for sterilization purposes, there are rubber gloves, alcohol swabs, and a breathing mask for CPR (see Figure 1). Mouth to mouth is not mandated for a civilian responding to an overdose, but a mask is provided to protect the individual administering CPR in case of infection, vomiting, or other circumstances. Next, there are two doses of Narcan in each kit, along with 2 syringes or nasal spray applicators. The intramuscular doses are delivered into the arm or leg (a large muscle in the body), while the intranasal is absorbed through the nasal system, and should be split approximately half and half in each nostril.

Since the kits contain two doses, it is important to know that a single dose of Narcan may not be effective. If in 3-5 minutes the first dose does not seem to effect the individual, the second dose should be administered. This may be done by medical personnel depending on response time, but it is still important to monitor the unconscious individual.



The kits can be stored anywhere, and do not need to be kept in a particular climate setting, but should be kept on the person at all times in case of an overdose encounter. The medication life is about two years, but can still be effective up to 5 years. If a kit is expired or used, the Clinton Family Health Center will refill and replace kits from individuals who attended their training session. The Health Center also keeps a log of how many kits they supply, as well as track how the kits are used. The training participants were told that if they administer Narcan, then they should return to Clinton Family Health Center for a refill and to also report the Narcan use.

Considerations

No training can completely prepare anyone for the situation of an overdose, but with the tools and knowledge provided, it may be a bit easier if any attendee does encounter this situation. The overdose death

rate is increasing exponentially, and it would be beneficial to have these Narcan trainings spread across many communities, both to increase education and awareness of the epidemic. This is not the end-all solution, but it can help save lives and have an impact for some people.

Future trainings may include an instructional video that focuses on each type of Narcan administration, mandated practiced administration (water filled applicators on a dummy), and an emphasis on the importance of reporting the use of Narcan; this data can be extremely important when framing interventions. Other recommendations include involve longer training videos and discussion.

References

- National Institute on Drug Abuse [NIDA] (September, 2016). Opioid Overdose Reversal with Naloxone (Narcan, Evzio). Retrieved November 29, 2017, from <https://www.drugabuse.gov/related-topics/opioid-overdose-reversal-naloxone-narcan-evzio>
- National Conference of State Legislatures [NCSL] (June 5, 2017). Drug Overdose Immunity and Good Samaritan Laws. Retrieved November 29, 2017, from <http://www.ncsl.org/research/civil-and-criminal-justice/drug-overdose-immunity-good-samaritan-laws.aspx>