



Talking to patients about naloxone: Insights from pharmacists in Camden, NJ

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In 2019 and 2020, the Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers conducted interviews with pharmacists in Camden, NJ, to better understand their approaches to supporting patients at risk of prescription opioid misuse. These conversations revealed insights into how pharmacists can talk to their patients about opioid safety and the use of naloxone (an opioid overdose antidote also known by the brand name Narcan), which are shared here. Special thanks to Anthony Minniti of Bell Pharmacy and John Power of Power's Pharmacy for their advice and examples.

- **Ensure that patients understand when their medications include an opiate.** Not all patients realize that medications such as Tylenol with codeine or others carry similar risks to Percocet, Vicodin, and Oxycodone. Pharmacists should explain how opiates may be a part of other medications.
- **Explain what naloxone is and what it does.** Discuss with patients that naloxone's only use is to reverse symptoms of opioid overdose and intoxication – it will not impact the body in any other way, and if someone is not experiencing an overdose, naloxone will not have an impact on them.
- **Discuss how having naloxone on hand during an overdose can help buy time until emergency services arrive.** Having naloxone available for immediate use while calling 9-1-1 can save someone's life.
- **Re-enforce that naloxone is a preventative therapy to keep in the home and community.** Due to stigma, some patients may not want naloxone in their home. Help decrease these concerns by using specific examples such as:
 - Elderly patients may forget that they took their medication and unknowingly take additional doses, possibly causing opiate intoxication.
 - Any patient receiving an opiate who may have children or elderly members of the family should be ready in case of accidental ingestion. Having naloxone at home is a way to plan ahead in case of accidental intoxication.
 - Due to the prevalence of opioid use within the community, someone in the neighborhood may experience an overdose. Naloxone can be used to also save neighbors' lives.
- **Compare Naloxone to other preventative therapies that are more familiar to many patients.** Some useful examples include keeping the following medications in the home:
 - An EpiPen for food and insect people with severe allergies;
 - Injectable glucose for people with diabetes; and
 - Syrup of ipecac for certain poisoning episodes.

Further reading:

- **Conversations are key to helping opioid patients** - examples of patient-centered language and tools to use when discussing opioids with patients, published in Pharmacy Today
- **Let's talk about naloxone - it saves lives** - tips on discussing Naloxone with specific patient populations, developed by the Pain, Palliative Care, and Addiction Special Interest Group for the APHA
- **Role of pharmacists in addressing New Jersey's opioid crisis** - course from Rowan University on evidence-based opioid addiction prevention

About the Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers

We are a multidisciplinary nonprofit working to improve care for people with complex health and social needs in Camden, NJ, and across the country. The Camden Coalition works to advance the field of **complex care** by implementing person-centered programs and piloting new models that address chronic illness and social barriers to health and wellbeing. Supported by a robust data infrastructure, cross-sector convening, and shared learning, our community-based programs deliver better care to the most vulnerable individuals **in Camden** and **regionally**.

Through our **National Center for Complex Health and Social Needs** (National Center), the Camden Coalition works to build the field of complex care by inspiring people to join the complex care community, connecting complex care practitioners with each other, and supporting the field with tools and resources that move the field of complex care forward. The National Center's founding sponsors are the Atlantic Philanthropies, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and AARP.

For more information about the Camden Coalition, visit www.camdenhealth.org.