

Preventing Opioid Overdose And Accidental Death

By Dr. Melinda Campopiano, M.D.

(NAPSA)—Some 25,000 American lives may be saved if families, doctors, emergency personnel and communities use the information provided in a toolkit designed to prevent opioid misuse and overdose.

Opioids Explained

Opioids include commonly prescribed drugs such as morphine, codeine, methadone, oxycodone, hydrocodone, fentanyl and hydromorphone, as well as illegal drugs such as heroin.

The Problem

Opioid overdose deaths nearly doubled between 2001 and 2010, largely because the number of people using and misusing illicit and prescription opioids has been rising.

Kana Enomoto, Acting Administrator at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), explained “Opioids can be a valuable part of medical treatment. However, in addition to reducing the perception of pain, they also affect other body systems that control breathing, heart rate and blood pressure.”

An Answer

To help, SAMHSA published the Opioid Overdose Prevention Toolkit. It gives specific segments of the community—professionals and others—good information on how to prevent overdose, recognize the symptoms of overdose and how to respond if opioid overdose has taken place.

Who Should Use The Toolkit

The Toolkit provides information and simple strategies based on current science for five essential groups:

- The Safety Advice for Patients and Family Members section helps people understand how to use opioid medications safely and minimize the risk of overdose.

- The Recovering from Opioid Overdose section provides resources for overdose survivors and family members to help them recover from the trauma of overdose and become advocates for prevention.

- In the Information for Prescribers section, physicians and other health care professionals learn about the risks of opioid overdose, clinically sound prescribing strategies for opioids and



It is time for a smart and sustainable response to prevent opioid misuse and overdose that includes treatment for people with opioid use disorder.

ideas to educate and monitor patients who receive opioids to minimize the risk of overdose.

- The Facts for Community Members section help governments, community organizations and private citizens develop sound policies and practices to help prevent opioid-related overdoses and deaths.

- In Five Essential Steps for First Responders, paramedics, EMS, police and other helpers find steps to respond to an overdose—including how to use the drug naloxone, which can reverse the deadly respiratory effects of an overdose—and provide other lifesaving assistance.

Treatment As Prevention

Effective treatment for opioid use or misuse reduces the risk of overdose. Using FDA-approved medications along with counseling and other supportive services is an effective way to treat opioid addiction.

Those who are looking for help for an addiction or other substance use disorder may find SAMHSA’s treatment locator (findtreatment.samhsa.gov) helpful. The database includes information about providers and treatment facilities in communities throughout the United States.

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Learn More

For further information on how you can prevent and address opioid overdose in your family or community, download the Opioid Overdose Prevention Toolkit at <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/Opioid-Overdose-Prevention-Toolkit-Updated-2014/SMA14-4742>.