

Lifesaving naloxone should be available almost everywhere

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Naloxone is an opioid-overdose antidote that if widely used could help stem the tide of the more than 130 Americans who die each day of drug overdoses. The drug has no potential for abuse and is harmless to those who are not experiencing an opioid overdose. Now the AMA is backing another solution to improve the antidote's availability: naloxone boxes.

These are bystander-friendly kits designed to accommodate four doses of naloxone, one rescue breath mask and an information card on accessing addiction treatment.

"Physicians and public health advocates all recognize that naloxone is a vital tool in our fight against opioid overdose deaths," said AMA President Patrice A. Harris, MD, MA. "Greater access to naloxone is a national priority and the AMA will support widespread implementation of naloxone rescue stations where this opioid-overdose treatment can be easily accessed to prevent a fatality."

A study on the feasibility of "public-access naloxone kits found that the bystanders in a simulated environment were willing to administer naloxone and 98% did so correctly," says a resolution proposed by the Michigan delegation.

The AMA House of Delegates adopted new policy to "support the legal access to and use of naloxone in all public spaces regardless of whether the individual holds a prescription."

Delegates also amended existing policy that asks the AMA to "support the widespread implementation of easily accessible naloxone rescue stations (public availability of Naloxone through wall-mounted display/storage units that also include instructions) throughout the country following distribution and legislative edicts similar to those" for AEDs.

AMA policy already includes a call for manufacturers or drug sponsors to pursue over-the-counter approval of naloxone with the FDA. The widespread of naloxone in public locations can only be successfully accomplished when this happens.

In a related action, physicians adopted a new policy calling for the AMA to disseminate educational materials aimed at dispelling the myths and fear caused by reports of bystander overdose from dermal contact or inhaled exposure with fentanyl or other synthetic derivatives. Fentanyl is very poorly absorbed through the skin, a fact that is often misrepresented, and the resulting fear has increased first-responder reluctance to intervene in a timely manner when an opioid overdose is suspected.

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