



## **LEARNING MODULE I**

### **Seminar # 28**

#### **NARCAN (Intervention)**

##### **Learning Objectives**

1. What is the issue.
2. How can the issue impact the family.
3. What are the options.

---

### *What is the issue?*

---

What is Narcan? It is a widely available, affordable, and fast-acting remedy for an opioid overdose. It works on any type of opioid, including synthetic opioids like heroin and fentanyl. It will not reverse the effects of other types of overdoses, such as those from cocaine or benzodiazepine medications. Narcan is an opioid antagonist, meaning it blocks the opioid receptors in the brain and reverses the symptoms of an opioid overdose.

Narcan works very quickly. A person who fell into an unresponsive state due to an overdose usually wakes up within two to three minutes after receiving a dose of Narcan. The individual will likely require further medical treatment and addiction care, but Narcan is a potentially lifesaving first step toward recovery.

#### **Safely Obtaining Narcan**

Most police officers, emergency medical responders, and hospitals receive Narcan training and carry Narcan for emergency uses. The drug generally exists in two forms capable of reversing an overdose: an injectable solution administered intravenously or a nasal spray. A trained professional will need to give a patient an IV to administer injectable Narcan, but anyone can administer the nasal spray version when necessary, so it is important to know how to administer Narcan.

If you are wondering how to get Narcan, most people can find Narcan nasal spray in local pharmacies and drug stores. Due to the ongoing and critical nature of the opioid crisis in the U.S., new laws have allowed anyone to purchase Narcan when necessary without the need for a prescription. Narcan uses generally extend to reversing opioid overdoses. The drug does not effectively function for any long-term uses.

---

### *How can the issue impact the family?*

---

Only trained medical professionals should administer Narcan through an IV. However, anyone who uses opioids, or who knows someone that does, may want to consider purchasing Narcan and keeping some on hand in case of emergency.

To administer Narcan effectively, follow a few simple steps:

Lay the overdose victim flat on his or her back and tilt the head back slightly.

Confirm the opioid overdose. Check for lowered heart rate, decreased breathing, and unresponsiveness. The only Narcan contraindications are known sensitivity or allergy to Narcan analogs.

Apply the nasal spray applicator into one nostril and squeeze.

After administering the first dose, contact emergency medical services and then wait two to three minutes.

If the victim's symptoms do not improve or he or she remains unresponsive, administer a second dose in the other nostril.

The victim should wake up within a few minutes, but the effects of Narcan only last 45 to 90 minutes. Emergency medical personnel will take over treatment once they arrive, but Narcan can potentially save a victim's life while waiting for an ambulance.

If you suspect your child or spouse has a problem with drugs, you should pick up two NARCAN doses. This would be located at a place of easy access for yourself or any member of your family to administer.

---

### *What are the options?*

---

The goal for a Quick Response Team is to be at the doorstep of overdose victims within 6 days of their overdose with one of us (a medic), a police officer, and a counselor from the local ADM Board and we will get the individual to detox and/or treatment if they are ready. If they do not answer the door or are not ready, we will continue to go back until they do.”

Not only are people seeing that there is hope in recovering from addiction, first responders are also seeing a positive impact of being able to help people get into treatment. “The Quick Response Team gives us an opportunity to be the starting point of recovery as we continue to focus on education, prevention, enforcement, and treatment to potentially reduce the instances of overdoses in our city,” said Cuyahoga Falls Police Chief Jack Davis.

The family needs to prepare for this visit and support this team in whatever way the team asks.

In Hamilton County the team's goal is to help addicts so they do not overdose again. Their findings are encouraging. In the second half of 2015, they saw a **30 percent reduction in opioid-related overdoses**. The departments also hand out information about addiction resources within Colerain's neighborhoods.

This educational work has been credited for also helping to reduce overdoses. The QRT has had a positive impact on the attitude and satisfaction level of first responders who are part of the quick response team, partially due to the response of those they are reaching, but also from the broader community.

The family should request a QRT follow up at the time a NARCAN has been administered.

---

## *Overdose Risk Factors*

---

Overdose Risk Factors and Prevention What is an overdose? An overdose (OD) is when the body is overwhelmed by exposure to a toxic amount of a substance or combination of substances. The body becomes unable to maintain or monitor functions necessary for life, like breathing, heart rate, and body temperature regulation.

Not everyone who overdoses will die; however, there can be long-term medical impacts from overdose, such as brain damage from lack of oxygen. Anyone can overdose regardless of their substance use history (including prescription substances).

Overdose risk is complicated and depends on interaction between several factors. Overdose risk can increase or decrease depending on the substance(s) taken, how the substance is taken, the setting where use occurs and characteristics of the individual.

Risk is very individualized. If several different people use the same amount of the same substance, it might affect them all differently.

*Risk Factor – The Substance(s) Taken Mixing Taking more than one substance (including alcohol and over the counter and prescription medications) over a short period of time substantially increases overdose risk.*

*In fact, most unintentional fatal overdoses involve multiple substances, including alcohol and prescribed medications. People may mix substances because they are unaware of the risk, or because it intensifies their high. Taking more than one downer (including opioids, alcohol, and prescription benzodiazepines [benzos] like Xanax) increases the risk of an overdose. All drugs in this class decrease the rate of breathing.*

*Despite common beliefs, stimulants will not cancel out the effects of depressants. In fact, people who use speedballs (mix uppers and downers) are at higher risk because the body must process more drugs. Stimulants cause the body to use up more oxygen and depressants reduce the breathing rate. Quantity Taken Overdose can occur if the drugs taken (including alcohol) build up faster than the body can break them down (metabolize). This can occur by taking too much, or too frequently, or if someone is unaware of how long a specific drug lasts in the body.*

Some drugs are harder to measure a specific dose (e.g., GHB) or may have varying time release mechanisms (immediate vs. extended). Most benzodiazepines have at least a 12-hour half-life, and the half-life of methadone can be 24 hours or more.

Many opioids come in both immediate release and sustained release formulations – however, the rate at which the drug is “available” may differ depending on the route of administration (e.g., injecting a sustained release medication may have a more toxic effect than swallowing it).

Finally, the actual amount of the active drug may vary depending on how much it has been cut or buffed, making it hard to determine quantity from sample to sample. Despite common beliefs, stimulants do not cancel out the effects of depressants.

**Training Manual:** Overdose Prevention, Recognition and Response 5 Strength Substances can have unknown content/adulterants due to processing (e.g., PMMA sold as MDMA). Other substances can be added before sale to the consumer either to expand the amount of product or to enhance the effects of the drugs. However, sometimes drugs are not cut prior to sale. A specific substance can have “analogues” – substances that have similar chemical structure but may differ in strength. For example, some analogues of fentanyl (e.g., carfentanyl) are stronger, while others are less strong. It is impossible to tell what is present in the drugs you purchase without scientific equipment.