



## *Department of Public Health*

Monroe County, New York

**Cheryl Dinolfo**  
*County Executive*

**Michael D. Mendoza, MD, MPH, MS**  
*Commissioner of Public Health*

09/18/2017

Dear Colleague,

As the Deputy Commissioner of the Monroe County Department of Public Health, I write to you to ensure that all providers in our area are well informed about ways they can combat the opioid epidemic that is inundating our local region and the country as a whole.

As I'm sure you are well aware, the number of people addicted to narcotic medication, or their illicit analogues, is increasing at an alarming rate. Concomitantly, the number of deaths by opioid overdose is also increasing. This problem affects Monroe County residents from every suburb, town and the City of Rochester. Whether they have shared it with you or not, it is very likely that some of your patients are affected by this problem.

As healthcare providers we can address this issue by prescribing opioid pain medication appropriately. In addition to creating guidelines for prescribing opioids, the CDC has developed a mobile app, pocket card, non-opioid treatment guide for chronic pain, checklist for prescribing opioids, fact sheets and multiple training webinars and videos about the topic. These resources can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/prescribing/providers.html> or by simply googling CDC and opioid guidelines. We can also inform patients about the addictive nature of opioid medications whenever we prescribe them.

Another strategy to address this issue is to consider prescribing naloxone (e.g. Narcan®), an opioid overdose reversal drug, whenever we prescribe any opioids. Overdoses can happen when patients misunderstand directions and accidentally take too much medication, grab the wrong bottle, or when family members get into a patient's medicines. Thus, I see every prescription for an opioid as an opportunity to also provide naloxone. In order to make naloxone more widely available, a standing order is available in all pharmacies which allows them to dispense nasal naloxone to any person who asks for it, without a prescription. While the medication is billed through a person's insurance, individuals should not worry that this will indicate that they have a substance abuse disorder. Requesting naloxone from a pharmacy will not change an individual's personal medical record.

For those patients whose co-payment might be a barrier to obtaining this medication, the NYS Department of Health has implemented the Naloxone Copayment Assistance Program, (NCAP). NCAP allows a pharmacy to bill the DOH for up to \$40 of a co-payment for Naloxone, whether it is prescribed to an individual or provided under the non-patient specific standing order (see scanned copy of NCAP billing pamphlet). Palm cards and brochures about both these programs can be ordered from NYS at no cost by emailing [BOO19w@health.ny.gov](mailto:BOO19w@health.ny.gov). Even if you do not prescribe naloxone, please inform your patients of these two initiatives so that anyone can obtain this life-saving antidote and be prepared to act in case they witness a person passing out in a public library, restaurant, sporting event, anywhere.

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[www.monroecounty.gov](http://www.monroecounty.gov)



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Individuals without insurance can obtain a free kit containing 2 doses of Naloxone by attending free, regularly scheduled trainings offered by the Monroe County Department of Public Health, Strong Behavioral Health or Trillium Health. The Monroe County Department of Public Health can be reached at (585)753-2991 or emailing [mhealth@monroecounty.gov](mailto:mhealth@monroecounty.gov). To find out when the next available weekday training will take place, contact Michele Hermann at (585) 275-1829 or [Michele\\_Herrmann@urmc.rochester.edu](mailto:Michele_Herrmann@urmc.rochester.edu). For weekend trainings, contact Trillium Health at [OOP@trilliumhealth.org](mailto:OOP@trilliumhealth.org).

By prescribing opioids judiciously, educating our patients properly, and sharing the above information broadly, we can all contribute to protecting our patients and communities from overdose deaths due to opioids. If you have any questions, want to learn more about how to order NCAP materials to display in your office, or our office can be of assistance to you around this topic, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at [marielenavelezdebrown@monroecounty.gov](mailto:marielenavelezdebrown@monroecounty.gov) or 585-753-2989.

Thanks very much.

Marielena Vélez de Brown, MD, MPH  
Deputy Commissioner of Public Health  
Monroe County Department of Public Health

