Emergency overdose prevention Toolkit released by Feds

By ACSH Staff — October 4, 2013

The Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has released the Opioid Overdose Prevention Toolkit. It’s the first federal resource promoting safety and prevention information for persons at risk for overdose. Its contents include signs to help responders and friends or family recognize and respond to opioid/opiate narcotic ODs. The kit also highlights the role of naloxone (Narcan) in preventing fatal consequences of an overdose.

According to the directions included in the Toolkit, it provides communities and local governments with material to develop policies and practices to help prevent opioid-related overdoses and deaths. It is aimed at first responders, treatment providers, and those recovering from opioid overdose.

We discussed this issue a short time ago. The background was this: Opiate drugs are widely used, and very effective, for pain relief. They are also the drugs of choice for many addicts. They carry a real risk, however, of death from overdose (OD). This is not a rare occurrence: According to the CDC, in both 2009 and 2010, over 37,000 people died of drug ODs an astounding toll of 100 American OD deaths every day (on average).

Now the word is out that the White House is encouraging the provision of Narcan to first responders police and Emergency Medical Technicians so that they can act quickly in cases of opiate overdose.

Gil Kerlikowske, director of the White House’s drug control office, commented that making naloxone more available would be a science-based drug policy that addresses the national drug challenge as a public health issue, not just a criminal justice issue.

ACSH’s Dr. Gil Ross agrees This is a much-needed harm reduction action that will help many and hurt no one. We’re very pleased with this initiative.

Dr. Ross adds this pertaining to the current new Toolkit release: While educating caregivers, first responders, friends and family as well as the substance-abuser about such concerns covered in
this Toolkit, I still strongly advocate more widespread access to and use of naloxone in the acute situation, for the reasons I mentioned last month: immediate access to Narcan would save many from preventable OD death. It’s too bad this kit does not include that substance.

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