NCADD
NATIONAL COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE, INC.

Opioid-Overdose Antidote Can Save Lives and Money

Saturday, 05 January 2013 18:37

The opioid-overdose antidote naloxone can save lives and money when distributed to heroin users, a new study finds.

Researchers at the San Francisco Department of Public Health concluded that one death may be prevented for every 164 naloxone injection kits given to heroin users, Reuters reports. They estimate the kits would cost approximately $400 for every year of healthy life gained.

"The great news here is these overdose deaths can be prevented, it's cost effective to do so, and may even be cost saving," lead author Dr. Phillip Coffin told Reuters. He created a computer simulation to predict what would happen if naloxone injection kits were distributed to 20 percent of heroin users in the United States.

He compared the resulting deaths and costs to a simulation of heroin users who did not receive the kits. He concluded in a population of 200,000 heroin users, 6.5 percent of deaths could be prevented with naloxone kits.

The study appears in the Annals of Internal Medicine.

Naloxone, sold under the brand name Narcan, safely reverses the potentially fatal side effects of an overdose of oxycodone, heroin and other opioids. It has been routinely used by emergency rooms and ambulance crews for decades. In the past few years, naloxone has been distributed free to opioid users and their loved ones, in a growing number of sites around the country.

A recent report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that widely distributing naloxone, and training people in how to use it, could save many lives. It has successfully reversed more than 10,000 drug overdoses since 1996, according to the CDC report. Naloxone is not effective in treating drug overdoses that do not involve opioids.

For additional information about specific prescription drugs by drug category, street name, how it is used and health risks, click here to read: Selected Prescription Drugs With Potential For

Abuse.