

July 22, 2015

**The University of Findlay College of Pharmacy Press Release:**

*The University of Findlay College of Pharmacy Announces Financial Support of Naloxone Program at the Findlay Health Department*

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Hello, my name is Deborah Parker and I am the Dean of the University of Findlay College of Pharmacy. I am pleased to be here today to share with you news of this partnership between the University of Findlay and the Findlay Health Department that will provide an opportunity to help save the lives of those who are at risk of an opiate overdose.

Prescription drug overdose has become an epidemic nationally, statewide, and even locally. In 2013, there were over 2,100 drug-related overdose deaths in Ohio. We have learned that prescription drug abuse, particularly opioid prescription drug abuse, can lead to heroin abuse. In fact, heroin-related deaths actually surpassed those associated with prescription opiate overdoses in 2013.

From 2009 to 2015, Hancock County had 59 drug-related overdose deaths and 630 visits to the hospital emergency room caused by drug overdose.

This data is indicative of a growing national epidemic of which Hancock County is not been immune.

The Hancock County Prescription Medication/Opiate Task Force was established in 2010 in response to the increasing need to address prescription medication and opiate abuse issues in our community. Working collaboratively with community partners and stakeholders, the Task Force implements evidence-based environmental prevention strategies in an effort to minimize the number of new cases of prescription medication or opiate abuse.

The University of Findlay and the College of Pharmacy have been an integral part and critical stakeholders of the Task Force since its inception.

The University of Findlay College of Pharmacy cares deeply about the appropriate use of medications and the epidemic of prescription medication overdose. We also recognize the importance and need for adequate access to life-saving opiate overdose reversal medications, such as Naloxone.

What we know is that many drug overdose victims end up dying. Victims' families and friends do not know what to do or how to help someone who is experiencing an overdose. Likewise, people who are using together often do not seek help when someone experiences an overdose out of fear of arrest.

However, we also know that a growing number of overdose victims are saved by Naloxone. Recently, a statewide initiative whose goal was to expand access to

Naloxone, had significant impact shortly after its implementation. Lorain County was one of the first communities to participate in this program in 2013 and saved 63 lives through the use of Naloxone.

Naloxone was administered by Ohio EMS personnel 12,256 times in 2013 and 15,493 times in 2014. Imagine how much greater the overdose death rate would have been if Naloxone was not readily available by EMS personnel and first responders.

The exciting news is that several things have happened in recent months that are enabling an even greater increase in access and use of Naloxone in our community.

Ohio House Bill 4, sponsored by Ohio State Representative Robert Sprague, was recently passed by the Ohio Legislature and just signed by Governor Kasich last Friday. This bill allows pharmacists and authorized agencies to provide Naloxone without a prescription, creating the greatest increase in access to Naloxone to date.

Governor Kasich's approved executive budget for the 2016-2017 biennium includes investments in Naloxone, such as providing funding to local health departments to increase supply of the life-saving medication. Our local health department will receive state funds that will allow it to purchase at least 20 Naloxone kits.

It is clear that our state elected officials are just as concerned as our Task Force in keeping our community members alive.

The Findlay Health Department has also been a prominent member of the Task Force and has agreed to assist with the increase of access to Naloxone at little to no cost for qualifying individuals. This donation presented today will begin to allow this program to take shape.

I am pleased to announce that the College of Pharmacy is here today to demonstrate support of an initiative that will have an immediate impact on our community and increase the availability of Naloxone. Today's financial contribution to the Findlay Health Department could potentially save the lives of 25 Findlay and Hancock County residents.

And now, I would like to invite Barb Wilhlem, Deputy Director of the Findlay Health Department to provide a few additional comments about this program.

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