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Texas Pharmacy Association Responds to Escalating Opioid Overdose Epidemic
Standing Order Announced Expanding Pharmacists Ability to Provide Naloxone

Austin, TX, June 16, 2016: With a continuing focus on saving lives, the Texas Pharmacy Association (TPA) announces the implementation of an expansive physician-authorized “standing order” regarding the dispensing of Naloxone/Narcan—a fast-acting antidote that can be administered to someone who is actively overdosing on opioids.

When someone has overdosed on an opioid drug, the individual has only minutes to live if no action is taken. Effective August 1, the standing order will allow qualified Texas pharmacists to dispense Naloxone to patients and/or third parties with connections to the patient who the pharmacist believes may have a medical need.

Pharmacists will be authorized to act under the standing order only after they have completed a one-hour course accredited by the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) and in coordination with TPA. The qualifying educational course also will be available at no cost through TPA after August 1, 2016.

This new dispensing authority is a part of TPA’s Saving Lives Initiative, which includes a recently enacted law allowing pharmacists to administer epinephrine in an emergency situation, and comes at a time when not only Texas, but the entire country is witnessing a tremendous surge in tragic deaths due to opioid overdoses.

In late 2015, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency made the shocking announcement that, “Drug overdose deaths are the leading cause of injury death in the United States, ahead of even motor vehicle deaths. And according to the Center for Disease Control, (CDC), “The United States is experiencing an epidemic of drug overdose (poisoning) deaths. Since 2000, the rate of deaths from drug overdoses has increased 137%, including a 200% increase in the rate of overdose deaths involving opioids (opioid pain relievers and heroin).

During the last session of the Texas Legislature, TPA led efforts to pass Senate Bill 1462 which allowed authorized medical personnel to prescribe the opioid antagonist Naloxone either directly to a third-party patient (not necessarily the end-user) or through a standing order. Building on that success, TPA has created a physician-signed standing order—in essence, a statewide prescription—so that pharmacists can dispense an opioid antagonist to a third party.

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It’s important to note that deaths due to opioid overdoses affect our entire population. People often think that prescription and over-the-counter drugs are safer than illicit drugs. But they can be as addictive and dangerous and put users at risk for other adverse health effects, including overdose—especially when taken along with other drugs or alcohol. As Texas Senator Royce West (D-Dallas) pointed out in his analysis of SB 1462 regarding opioids, “At highest risk are the elderly and medically ill who are already medically compromised. This is typically not someone addicted to opioids, but taking opioids for pain as prescribed.”

TPA has worked closely with the Texas Overdose Naloxone Initiative to implement this standing order that drastically expands the authority and ability of pharmacists to get Naloxone in to the hands of Texans across the state.

“Texas has the second highest cost of healthcare associated with opioid abuse in the country, and of the top 25 cities in the country with opiate abuse problems, four are in Texas. So having access to life-saving medications for the citizens of Texas is an important way to curb this epidemic,” said Mark Kinzly, co-founder of Texas Overdose Naloxone Initiative.

“As a clinical pharmacist and educator, I’ve been working to expand patient access to life-saving naloxone. The largest impediment has been the requirement for a physician visit and prescription, but that impediment has now been removed,” said Lucas G. Hill, Pharm.D., Clinical Assistant Professor at The University of Texas at Austin College of Pharmacy. “The release of this standing order by the Texas Pharmacy Association is a landmark moment in the fight against opioid overdose. Thanks to this effort, pharmacists will be empowered to save lives all across this great state. Furthermore, this initiative will serve as another way to highlight pharmacists as key healthcare providers.”

“Through TPA’s standing order, pharmacists in Texas will be allowed to dispense Naloxone to any patient that they believe may have a medical need. This standing order is intended for every pharmacist in Texas to have the ability to provide this critical lifesaving antidote,” said TPA President Rene Garza of Stonegate Pharmacy in Austin.

About TPA
The Texas Pharmacy Association, established in 1879, is a statewide professional organization representing all Texas pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and student pharmacists. TPA is dedicated to advancing the practice of pharmacy to enhance the delivery of quality health care to all Texans. Currently, there are more than 31,000 pharmacists, 60,000 pharmacy technicians and almost 4,000 student pharmacists in Texas. For more information, visit texaspharmacy.org.

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