

Access to Narcan® in Community Pharmacies

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Purpose

With opioid overdoses on the rise in the United States since the 1990s¹, certain laws have been implemented to allow for easier access of Narcan® (naloxone), a medication that reverses the effects of opioids almost immediately. Naloxone-access laws (NALs) allowing pharmacists to dispense naloxone without a prescription have been implemented in Illinois; however, barriers still hinder patients' ability to obtain naloxone. These barriers include pharmacies not regularly stocking naloxone, as well as pharmacies not taking advantage of the NALs. The purpose of this study was to assess how often patients may encounter these barriers in community pharmacies across Illinois.

Methods

All community pharmacies across 4 counties in Illinois were surveyed over the phone. The survey included 2 questions: "Do you currently have Narcan® in stock?" and "Do you need a prescription to get Narcan® at your pharmacy?"

Results

Of the 76 pharmacies that participated in the study, 9 (11.8%) did not have Narcan® in stock, and 18 (23.7%) required a prescription. Altogether, 22 pharmacies (28.9%) were found to present barriers to obtaining Narcan®, whether it was due to not having the product in stock, requiring a prescription, or both.

Conclusion

Although NALs have made naloxone legally obtainable through community pharmacies, this privilege is not utilized as often as it could be. If all community pharmacies were to regularly stock naloxone and educate their employees on the standing order, access to naloxone could improve immensely. As a result, death due to opioid overdoses could decline, effectively combating the opioid epidemic.