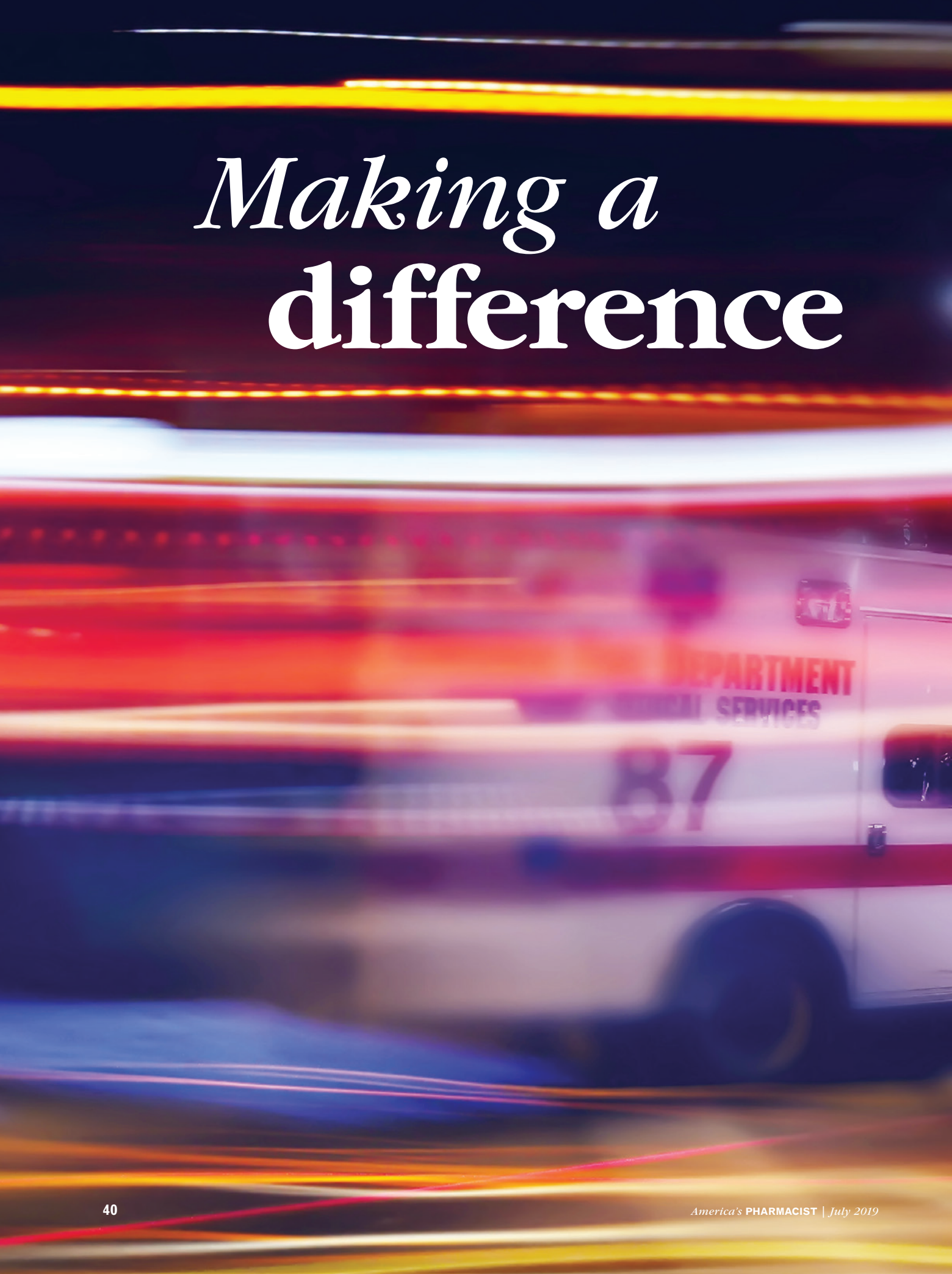


Making a difference





Through collaboration, community pharmacists and first responders can help reduce opioid deaths

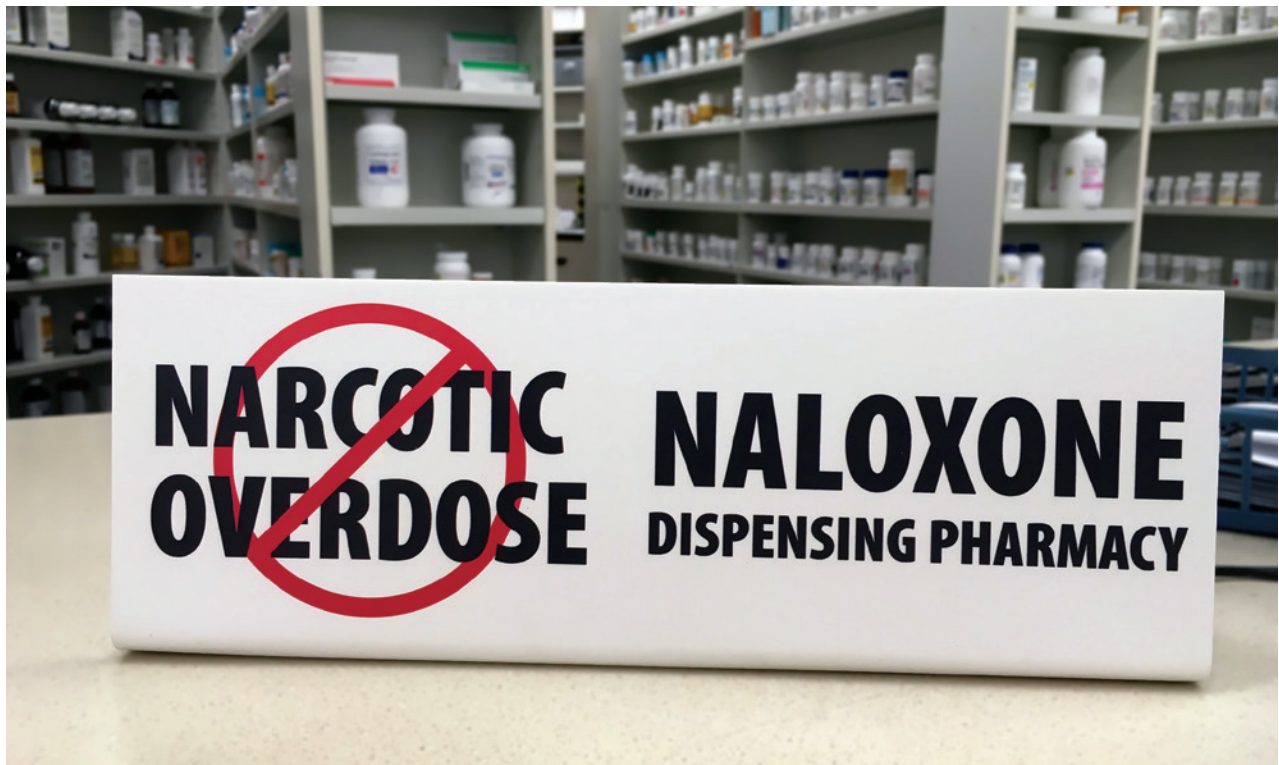
by Austin Crocker, Lauren Bloodworth, Jordan Ballou, and Laurie Fleming

Communities across the United States have been devastated by a surge in opioid abuse, overdoses, and opioid-related deaths. Multiple factors contribute to this epidemic. Prescription opioid use has grown exponentially in recent years, with the Institute of Medicine reporting that approximately 100 million Americans are living with chronic pain, and an additional 46 million individuals are in acute pain due to surgery. Increased opioid use is not the only cause for rising overdoses.

A meta-analysis assessing patient use and opioid storage found that anywhere from 67 to 92 percent of patients who were prescribed opioids had medication remaining, and that approximately 75 percent of patients did not store these medications in locked containers. Prescription opioids are not the only issue, as heroin use increased 63 percent from 2002 to 2013 and in 2017 approximately 494,000 people aged 12 and older in the United States admitted to using heroin in the past year. (<https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/data/heroin.html>).

All of these factors have contributed to a rise in overdose deaths. The total number of drug overdose deaths in 2016 alone was more than 63,600. For opioids specifically, from 2010 to 2017, the number of opioid-related overdose deaths more than doubled, from 21,089 to 49,068. Opioids have consistently accounted for approximately 67 percent of all overdose deaths. For perspective, this equates to about 8,000 more deaths than the 41,000 people who die from breast cancer each year.

For reference information and source material for this article, please contact America's Pharmacist® managing editor Chris Linville at 703-838-2680 or email chris.linville@ncpanet.org.



Naloxone dispensing action items

- Learn your state's regulations on naloxone dispensing - <https://naspa.us/resource/naloxone-access-community-pharmacies/>
- Attend a naloxone train-the-trainer program
- Contact first responders in your community to offer a partnership to reduce overdose deaths.
- Provide opioid overdose training and proper administration techniques of various naloxone dosage forms.
- Connect the first responders to a reliable supply of naloxone.
- Follow up to track outcomes and to answer first responder questions after collaborating together.

LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

Lawmakers at the federal and state levels have attempted to address this epidemic. By the end of 2017, legislation was enacted in all 50 states to improve naloxone access. How this access is provided varies by state. All states have incorporated standing orders, which is a pre-written medication order with specific instructions to administer medication to a patient who meets defined requirements.

In 2017, Mississippi passed House Bill 996, authorizing pharmacies to dispense naloxone under a stand-

ing order to anyone in a position to assist a person at risk of overdosing. HB 996 includes emergency medical technicians, firefighters, and law enforcement officers among those who can administer naloxone in overdose situations.

It should be noted that emergency medical technicians have first responder training on proper naloxone use, whereas firefighters and law enforcement usually do not have this information included in their standard training programs. Furthermore, the bill provides "Good Samaritan" immunity to anyone providing emer-

gency care in good faith against any civil and criminal liabilities associated with administering naloxone.

TAKING ACTION

While law enforcement and firefighters are legally allowed to administer naloxone, education and training are needed to capitalize on this opportunity. In the fall of 2017, Tyson Drug Co., an independent pharmacy located in Marshall County, Miss., partnered with local law enforcement officers and firefighters to provide education and training to prepare them for carrying naloxone in the field.

Additionally, a pre- and post-survey was performed during the educational session. The survey's goal was to assess whether law enforcement and firefighter training on opioid reversal agents improves their knowledge on the subject, while positively changing the perception of, and confidence in, administration of naloxone administration in the field. In all, 57 participants completed the survey, and the average score of the knowledge assessment increased from 35 percent to 56 percent. However, these scores were considerably lower than desired. Participants also had a statistically significant positive change in their perception and confidence in their ability to recognize opioid overdose symptoms and properly administer naloxone.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

The study results support collaboration between health care professionals and first responders to work in fighting opioid overdoses. While all states have passed laws enabling first responders to administer opioid reversal agents, many communities cannot act on this legislation because some law enforcement and fire agencies do not have professional training and can't acquire naloxone. Community pharmacists are trusted and accessible, so it's natural that they can be a valuable

resource in providing first responder training. Anecdotally, during the first six months following the study's conclusion, training program participants administered naloxone to five patients who had overdosed, potentially saving their lives.

Local governments, first responders, and pharmacies must work together to help combat the opioid epidemic and save lives in their own communities. Thus, training local first responders on properly administering these potentially lifesaving reversal agents could have a vital role in reducing opioid-related deaths.

The Mississippi Board of Pharmacy has noticed these proactive measures. The board's then-Executive Director Frank Gammill, commenting on the collaborative partnership between first responders and Tyson Drug Co., said, "Tyson's actions are making a real difference. I encourage all pharmacies across the state to follow Tyson's lead and become more involved in the training and distribution of naloxone in their area."

Additionally, in May 2018, Mississippi State Health Officer Mary Carrier issued a statewide standing order enabling all pharmacies to dispense naloxone without a prescription. The standing order now enables any

pharmacy in the state to dispense naloxone to the general public and provide counseling on proper administration technique.

WORKING TOGETHER

Providing opioid education classes to law enforcement and firefighters improved their knowledge, perception, and confidence in identifying overdose symptoms while equipping the first responders with the skills to save lives with naloxone. The study was made possible as a result of proactive laws passed by the state of Mississippi which allow the dispensing of naloxone through a standing order. The results, and more importantly, the community effect can be replicated as long as other local governments, first responders, and pharmacies work together to help combat the opioid epidemic to save lives in their own communities. ■

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Lend your expertise with training programs for first responders

Community pharmacists interested in providing first responder training should research train-the-trainer programs offered by the state health department or non-profit naloxone access advocacy organizations. Below are a few links to resources.

- <https://kyhrc.org/naloxone-train-the-trainer-class/>
- <https://harmreduction.org/issues/overdose-prevention/tools-best-practices/training-materials/>
- <http://dbhds.virginia.gov/developmental-services/substance-abuse-services/revive>