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# Upper Darby police tackle opioid epidemic

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**UPPER DARBY, PA (WTXF)** - Combine America's skyrocketing opioid epidemic, and an almost-miracle device that can seemingly bring overdose victims back from the dead, and you've created a whole new world for local police.

FOX 29's Bruce Gordon recently spent time with cops in Upper Darby where a high-profile Narcan save put this issue front and center.

When Upper Darby Police Officer Matt Lynch reports for duty, he straps on his gear: sidearm, radio, batton, handcuffs, and extra ammo clips.

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Then Lynch heads to the rack of patrol car keys, to retrieve what's become one of THE most important tools he'll carry. A little red box.

The little red boxes hold Narcan kits. They're a no-assembly required, nasal spray antidote that can bring a heroin overdose victim virtually back from the dead

Lynch remembers his first exposure to the new kits.

"Carried this red box with me everywhere, and it was like, when am I ever going to use this? And probably a week or two later it came up. It happened," Officer Lynch recalled.

In just the past 16 months, Lynch and his fellow Upper Darby police officers have used Narcan 86 times to revive overdose victims, 74 times, it did the trick.

You may remember a viral video from back in January, which shows 25-year-old Michael Meeney of Delaware County, shooting heroin aboard a crowded SEPTA bus.

Moments later, Meeney collapses, and falls unconscious onto the floor of the moving vehicle.

Upper Darby police are first on the scene, pull out their little red box, and use the nasal Narcan to revive Meeney.

He was later charged with drug possession, in the hopes of getting him into treatment.

Upper Darby police officials say Narcan has turned their officers into a hybrid of cop-and-EMT.

"We're interested in saving lives, and this is probably one of the more dramatic ways that we can do that," explained Captain Thomas Johnson.

Captain Johnson says his officers are enthusiastic about how Narcan has expanded their duties, or maybe more accurately, "expanded their opportunities."

"We kid that we're worried that there's gonna be two police cars crashing into each other trying to get to the person that they can revive, because there's an incredible amount of satisfaction when you can save a life," Captain Johnson said.

Bruce Gordon talked at length with Officer Lynch as he patrolled Upper Darby on a recent afternoon.

He has several Narcan "saves" to his credit, but says "back from the dead" victims aren't always grateful.

"It's neat to see it, at that point, but my first thing, right after that is, is this person going to be combative? Is he going to assault me or anyone else?" Officer Lynch explained.

There's a bigger problem; cops with Narcan can save a drug user for the moment, but many users cannot kick the habit.

In April of last year, Lynch saved an overdose victim, a 40-year-old man, with Narcan.

"He started coming around and his girlfriend thanked us for helping him come back and bring him back to life and, but he told me as he was getting loaded onto the ambulance, that he just got out of rehab, a week prior," Lynch explained

Four days later, that man overdosed again.

This time, Narcan could not save him.

"The addiction was more powerful than life. So it was definitely a sad situation," Lynch said.

Like many police officers, Matt Lynch has served in the military.

He was an infantry platoon leader in Afghanistan, and remembers seeing vast fields of poppies as colorful, almost beautiful.

Over there, the drug trade helps fund the Taliban, and back home, it destroys the lives of those he serves.

"So if you see them they're really wild looking and cool looking, but down here you actually see the end result, and it's horrible," Lynch explained.

Matt Lynch says he enjoys the new lifesaving opportunities that come with the little red box he carries.

But he knows all too well, that Narcan and his quick use of it, is only a temporary answer for the drug user.

"If we're there and we can help, we'll do our best. But at the end of the day, you have to want to help yourself," Lynch said.

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