

Delaware County police first in world to use new lifesaving drug

Jan 29, 2016



Delaware County Councilman Dave White demonstrates Narcan Spray at a press conference this week. Pictured to his right is District Attorney Jack Whelan.

Ridley Township>> Joined by Delaware County police chiefs and members of the Delaware County Heroin Task Force, District Attorney Jack Whelan and Delaware County Councilman Dave White announced that police officers in Delaware County will be first in the world to carry and administer a newly developed nasal version of naloxone for emergency treatment of an opioid overdose. NARCAN® (naloxone HCl) Nasal Spray is the only FDA approved, ready-to-use, needle-free nasal spray version of naloxone.

Developed by Adapt Pharma, located in Radnor Township with its global headquarters in Dublin, Ireland, the NARCAN Nasal spray was purchased by Delaware County Council through federal grant funding. Each of the nearly 400 police vehicles in Delaware County will be equipped with two 4 mg NARCAN Nasal Spray applicators at a cost of \$37.50 per dose. Authorities believe it has been crucial for police in Delaware County to have naloxone since they are often first on the scene. Experts say those early minutes can be the key to saving a life. It is believed that the new NARCAN Nasal Spray could make a life-saving difference in those moments because the nasal spray device is easier to use and requires no assembly.

“We are fortunate to have outstanding police officers here in Delaware County, many who consider naloxone just another tool to perform the job they are sworn to do,” said District Attorney Jack Whelan. “However, to us, and the families of those experiencing an overdose, they are heroes. Every day, they are literally bringing people back to life, who will hopefully seek treatment to overcome their addiction.”

While not a substitute for emergency medical care, timely administration of naloxone can help rapidly reverse the life-threatening breathing difficulties that an opioid overdose may cause until emergency medical care can be administered.

"We know the first few minutes, and even seconds are crucial when responding to an overdose. NARCAN Nasal Spray takes just seconds to open and use," said Delaware County Councilman Dave White. "Our goal is to equip our police officers with the most effective tools we can in order to save as many lives as possible."

Delaware County became the first in Pennsylvania to save a life with naloxone after David's Law was passed in Nov. 29, 2014 when the District Attorney's Office partnered with police chiefs to develop a county-wide naloxone program, funded by Delaware County Council through grant funding. The law enforcement naloxone program has since become a model program for police departments across the state. In just over one year since that law was passed, police in Delaware County have saved 170 lives with the use of naloxone.

According to officials the average age of an overdose victim saved by police in Delaware County is 31-years old, with the youngest being 19-years of age and the oldest, 68-years of age. Despite the repeated efforts and response by police, who are often the first on scene, coupled with the use of naloxone by EMS and first responders, the number of heroin-related deaths in Delaware County continues to rise, and doubled with an estimated 101 deaths in 2015 as compared to 52 in 2014 according to the Delaware County medical examiner. In 2014, there were a total of 191 drug deaths in Delaware County. Anyone who uses prescription opioids to manage chronic pain, or who uses heroin, is potentially at risk of experiencing an accidental, life-threatening or fatal opioid overdose from the misuse of those products.

"Whether it is a child who gets into the family medicine cabinet, a senior citizen who accidentally overdoses on their pain medication or an addict who encounters a "bad batch" of heroin – all of these lives matter and are worth saving," said District Attorney Jack Whelan. "Time and time again, our police officers are bringing people back from the brink of death, demonstrating that they are there to protect and serve the public, no matter what the circumstance."

District Attorney Jack Whelan noted that the success of the naloxone initiative along with other efforts to reduce heroin use was made possible through the existing partnership between law enforcement, the community, Task Force coalition members, behavioral health members and educators. The Task Force was formed by the District Attorney and Delaware County Council in Sept. 2012 to combat the growing issue of prescription drug and heroin use after county officials saw an alarming rate of deaths. Over three years, the Task Force has launched several initiatives based on prevention, education and awareness including the installation of 40 drug drop boxes and partnering with the Narcotics Overdose Prevention & Education (NOPE) Task Force to provide prevention education in schools.

The latest initiative, the county-wide NARCAN Nasal Spray program, includes a partnership with Adapt Pharma, the newest member of the Heroin Task Force.

"Adapt Pharma is thrilled that Delaware County will become the first customer to receive NARCAN Nasal Spray, the only FDA-approved, needle-free nasal spray formulation of naloxone," said Matt Ruth, U.S. Chief Commercial Officer of Adapt Pharma. "Adapt is proud that our home county has become a role model within Pennsylvania, and the country, by increasing access to naloxone and combatting our nation's growing opioid overdose epidemic."

According to Adapt Pharma, NARCAN Nasal Spray will be available to consumers to be dispensed by a pharmacist without a prescription in the early spring from certain participating retail pharmacies. For more information and instructions on the use of NARCAN Nasal Spray, visit www.narcannasalspray.com. Currently, naloxone is available at various pharmacies throughout Delaware County. Family members and friends can access this medication by obtaining a prescription from their family doctor or by using the standing order, a prescription written for the general public, issued by the PA Physician General. The standing order is kept on file at many pharmacies, or can be downloaded from the Pennsylvania Department of Health website at www.health.pa.gov. While your local pharmacy may not have naloxone in stock, pharmacies are generally able to order naloxone. Always seek emergency medical assistance in the event of a known or suspected opioid emergency after administration of naloxone.