Antidote that counteracts the effects of opioid overdose available for free

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It’s a harrowing scene that is becoming all too common with West Virginia’s opioid crisis. A person stumbles upon a friend or loved one who has passed out after overdosing on opioids.

West Virginia currently is experiencing an opioid drug crisis and has the highest rate of death from opioid overdose than any other state in the nation. In 2015, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (cdc.gov), that rate was 41.5 deaths per 100,000 people. The state with the second-highest rate was New Hampshire at 34.3 deaths per 100,000 people.

Now there is a way for bystanders to help counteract the effects of an overdose while emergency medical teams are on the way. Naloxone, also known as Narcan, can be administered to someone who is found unconscious from overdosing on heroin or other opioid drugs, including prescription medications such as codeine, fentanyl, morphine and oxycodone.

The Monongalia County Health Department has 108 Naloxone kits to distribute to any individual who goes through a 30-minute training session on how to use the medication. The Naloxone was provided by the West Virginia University Injury Control Research Center, part of the WVU School of Public Health.
During the training, attendees will be taught what signs look for in an opioid overdose, including blue lips; slow, labored or no breathing; and the patient being unresponsive to shaking or a rub with the knuckles on the sternum.

After calling 911 to get medical attention for the patient, the trained bystander can administer the medication through the nasal passages after attaching a cone-shaped atomizer to the nasal passages. The atomizer turns the liquid into a spray that can effectively be absorbed into the bloodstream.

In most instances, Naloxone will reverse the effect of the opioids and the person should wake up within minutes.

Those taking the training will also be taught to stay with the person until help arrives and to make sure additional opioids are not taken.

The kits come with two doses of Naloxone. If one does not work within a certain amount of time, a second dose can be administered.

People who administer the dose would not be subject to criminal prosecution if they are also drug users.

Individuals or groups can sign up for training. To get Naloxone, call the Monongalia County Health Department at 304-598-5119 to set up an appointment for training.