Researched Persuasive Writing and Speaking

Naloxone: Fighting the Opioid Epidemic

Alexa Albanese

Chapter 15980, Post Secondary/Collegiate Division

Nova Southeastern University

Florida
Alexa Albanese, Post Secondary/Collegiate, Nova Southeastern University

In a world consumed by drugs, it is only fair to ask whether or not it should be required for law enforcement to be prepared for situations in which people are found to have overdosed. Although the general idea of having police officers be prepared to help those who have indulged in dangerous substances sounds like a lucid benefit to society, one must first ask how this could be made possible.

One current concept that is becoming more popular is the carrying of naloxone by law enforcement while on the job. Naloxone is a medication that is meant to reverse opioid overdose by binding to its receptors, blocking and reversing the effects of the drugs. As of now, the U.S. has different rules regarding who can distribute naloxone and how in every state. Some states allow pharmacies to sell the medication without a prescription from a doctor, while others require that it is prescribed. Currently, a nasal spray known as Narcan is available for use, which seems to be the least invasive and most convenient (National Institute on Drug Abuse). It is most often distributed by health professionals and trained peers; thus, training law enforcement to distribute the medication can be effective in certain situations in order to help reverse the effects of drugs such as heroin, methadone, morphine, oxycodone, fentanyl, codeine, tramadol, and hydrocodone. Naloxone is even known to be able to help those who have overdosed to begin breathing again if they have stopped (NIOSH, 2018).

One very common practice in today’s society is the mixing of opioids into other drugs. This increases the amount of people who overdose on a daily basis, as even those who do not believe that they are indulging in opioids may fall victim to them. In the past three decades, death and injury due to poisoning, more than 90% of which are drug overdoses, has increased almost 600% (Davis, et al., 2014). Given the growing
impact of substances on today’s society, it is clear that law enforcement should be required to carry this medication.

In addition, it is a known fact that law enforcement is typically the first to arrive on the scene. Thus, if they are required to carry naloxone, the amount of time between the “onset of respiratory depression” and the administration of the medication can be reduced, also reducing the possible damage to the brain since this will increase as the time spent hypoxic increases (Davis, et al., 2015). Between January and September of 2017, the administration of naloxone by law enforcement in my hometown of Staten Island, New York, saved 125 people from overdoses (Rogers, 2017).

Despite the fact that the only logical explanation to this question may be obvious to most, it is not to everyone. It is true that some members of law enforcement do not support the idea of being required to carry the medication, as many feel as though this extra duty is "better suited for medical workers, [can] divert them from fighting crime and can put them in danger" because addicts can become combative and violent in this type of scenario. Since these people make their own choices when it comes to drugs, many officers believe that they should not have to put their safety at risk in attempt to save them, as it is only their job to enforce the law (Sewell, 2018).

Although the topic is subjective, and many officers have valid concerns, it is clear that citizens should take care of one another. Addiction is a very plaguing issue, and although people do make their own decisions, it is a disease. Society should be coming together to fight the battle, and by requiring first-responders to carry and administer the medication, the lives of those with a problem can be saved and given a second chance to seek help and better their lives. Today, we seek progress, not perfection.
Works Cited


