Researched Persuasive Writing and Speaking

**Naloxone: An Asset Not a Liability**

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On September 1st, 2017, Officer Justin Franklin of the Metro Nashville Police Department, responded to a report of a woman unconscious. When Officer Franklin arrived on the scene, he found a woman on her porch steps barely breathing. On the ground next to her was a syringe, a spoon and a small bag of the opioid heroin. An ambulance was on its way, but nobody knew if it would arrive on time. Officer Franklin reached into the pocket of his ballistic vest, ripped open a package, and squirted spray into the woman’s nostril. The woman sat up abruptly and wide-eyed. She had been pulled back from the brink of death by the drug naloxone (Kelman, 2018).

Available as an injection or nasal spray, naloxone is a drug that blocks and reverses the harmful effects of opioids. As drug overdoses continue to increase every year, naloxone is proving to be a useful antidote. Police departments that have authorized the use of naloxone have saved over 8,500 lives ("Law Enforcement FAQ on Naloxone Programs," n.d.). It is clearly a tremendous asset. All police officers should be required to carry the life-saving drug naloxone in order to combat against the rising opioid crisis.

Currently, law enforcement officers outnumber paramedics by approximately four to one, unfortunately, law enforcement officers in many states are not authorized to administer naloxone, even though they are usually the first to arrive on the scene of an overdose ("EMS Workforce for the 21st Century," 2018). Access to quick emergency care plays a critical role in preventing death by opioid overdose. Damage to the brain increases the longer the victim remains hypoxic, or deprived of adequate oxygen. The
quicker naloxone is administered the quicker normal respiration is restored, improving survival rates for overdose victims (Irwin K, Kim D, & Khoshnood K, 2009). That is why over 1,214 law enforcement agencies equip their officers with naloxone (Burke T, Fleming C, & Owen S, 2018). With every second counting, equipping police officers with naloxone will provide overdose victims a second chance at life.

Despite many departments choosing to equip officers with naloxone, several cite liability fears as a reason for not equipping officers with the life-saving medication. Naloxone, however, has no effect on someone who does not have opioids in their system (Law Enforcement FAQ on Naloxone Programs,” n.d.). If administered in error, naloxone will do nothing, but in the best case scenario, it will save a life. From a legal standpoint, it is very difficult to win a lawsuit against an officer who administers naloxone in good faith and in the course of employment ("Liability and Risk," 2018). In almost all states, the liability risk is further lessened by laws that provide police officers with additional layers of protection. As long as they act in good faith and within the scope of their training, the risk of liability to themselves or their employer is extremely low.

In summary, the increasing opioid overdose epidemic in the United States is showing no signs of slowing down. Imagine if your loved one was the one in need of emergency care. You would want those first on the scene to be equipped with the tools to save their life. That is why all police officers should be required to carry the life-saving drug naloxone in order to combat against the rising opioid crisis.
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