The Opioid Crisis in Minnesota: On the Ground Approaches

Laura Palombi, PharmD, MPH, MAT, AE-C
Heather Blue, PharmD, BCPS, BCGP

University of Minnesota
Objectives

• Describe current pharmacy practices to address the opioid crisis
• Evaluate pharmacist-led approaches to engage the community and health care providers in opioid safety initiatives
• Identify opportunities to address the opioid crisis through increase utilization of pharmacists as integral and accessible providers
• Laura Palombi, PharmD, MPH, MAT, AE-C
  – Community engagement to address substance use disorder
  – Carlton County Drug Court
• Heather Blue, PharmD, BCPS, BCGP
  – St. Luke’s Hospital emergency room practice
  – Naloxone education & distribution from the ER
The Problem

Overdose Deaths Involving Opioids, United States, 2000-2016

- Any Opioid
- Other Synthetic Opioids (e.g., fentanyl, tramadol)
- Commonly Prescribed Opioids (Natural & Semi-Synthetic Opioids and Methadone)
- Heroin

The Problem
Why pharmacists?

Pharmacists are an integral and accessible part of the healthcare team.
What WE are doing

• Involvement on Drug Court
• Increasing the availability of naloxone
• Educating prescribers and pharmacists
• Educating future providers
Community Engagement To Address Substance Use Disorder

**Carlton County:** Carlton County Drug Prevention Coalition

**St. Louis County:** Opioid Abuse Response Strategies Workgroup (North and South)

**Pine County:** Pine County Chemical Health Coalition

**Kanabec County:** Substance Abuse Coalition of Kanabec County
Statewide Targeted Response to the Opioid Crisis Grant

• **Build community coalitions** in Ely, Virginia, Hibbing, Cloquet and Cotton/Duluth

• **Engage institutions of higher education** in naloxone policies and procedures, training

• **Support Drug Court families** with family-centered supportive programming & naloxone training

• **Increase naloxone prescribing & dispensing**
Extension of the Community: Treatment Courts

• Established to address substance abuse while providing an alternative to prison sentences and traditional corrections supervision.

• Drug Courts have been shown to:
  – reduce crime in participants and graduates
  – save the criminal justice and health care systems money
  – reduce victimization
  – restore families.
Naloxone

- Naloxone is the reversal medication for opioids.
- If opioids have stopped their breathing, naloxone may be able to pull the opioids off the receptors and allow the person to breathe.
Naloxone Availability

• Through community outreach
  – Rural Aids Action Network
  – The Steve Rummler Hope Network
• Prescribed by medical prescribers
• Local pharmacies that dispense under a prescriber’s protocol
Pharmacist Survey

Collaboration with:
- Minnesota Department of Health
- Minnesota Pharmacists Association
- Minnesota Board of Pharmacy

- Survey was sent to 8405 MN Licensed Pharmacists
  - A total of 1564 pharmacists (19%) took the survey

Identified need for increased education on naloxone, improving opioid prescribing, collaboration with prescribers and available harm reduction tools
Continuing Medical Education

Sessions held in St. Louis County & Carlton County

Education focused on:
- Current opioid death statistics
- Identifying patients at high-risk of overdose
- Naloxone as a reversal agent
- How to increase naloxone distribution

Participants included:
- Physicians
- Dentists
- Public health
- Pharmacists
- Clinical social workers
Practice meets Research in the Emergency Department

- St. Luke’s Hospital, Duluth MN
- Initiated an opioid overdose education and naloxone distribution (OEND) service

Survey of staff identified a need to consider treatment transitions for patients
Medication Assisted Treatment

- Methadone, Suboxone, or long acting injectable medications such as Vivitrol
- Lack of prescribers in Greater Minnesota
- Need for additional providers
- Could utilize pharmacists
Educating Future Providers

- Expanded pharmacy student education:
  - Prescription monitoring program
  - Medication-assisted treatment (MAT)
  - Naloxone as an overdose reversal agent
  - Appropriate opiate prescribing
  - Interprofessional collaboration around substance use disorder
Innovative Educational Approach

• Interprofessional learning lab focused on opioids and social determinants of health
  – Medical students & pharmacy students
  – De-identified cases from clinical practice
What does Minnesota need?

- Increased education on appropriate opioid prescribing & dispensing
- Decreased barriers to obtaining naloxone
- Increased access to medication-assisted treatment
- Increased utilization of the pharmacists’ clinical skillset
QUESTIONS?

Laura Palombi, PharmD, MPH, MAT, AE-C
lpalombi@d.umn.edu
Heather Blue PharmD BCPS BCGP
hblue@d.umn.edu

University of Minnesota