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New Brunswick College of Pharmacists
Ordre des pharmaciens du Nouveau-Brunswick

Position Statement:

Naloxone

BACKGROUND

Naloxone is a life-saving medication used to treat respiratory depression caused by both natural and synthetic opioids. Opioid-related harm remains a critical public health issue, with a significant portion of opioid-involved deaths occurring accidentally. These fatalities are often driven by a contaminated drug supply, polysubstance use, and limited access to naloxone. While opioid use can increase the risk of respiratory depression, these risks are further increased in patients prescribed opioids for pain, opioid-naïve individuals including children, and individuals who unintentionally ingest opioids. Ensuring the availability of naloxone should be considered an essential aspect of care for individuals at risk of opioid overdose, or those likely to witness such events, irrespective of the substance's source. In the absence of opioids, naloxone exhibits no effect, and its only contraindication is a known hypersensitivity. Also, naloxone does not increase the likelihood of risk-taking behaviours, is non-addictive, and cannot be abused.

In New Brunswick, naloxone is categorized as Unscheduled and can be obtained without a prescription either as an injectable solution or a nasal spray. While pharmacist's intervention is not required for its sale, pharmacists continue to play a key role by providing counselling and education to ensure the safe and effective use of naloxone.

PURPOSE

To emphasize pharmacy professionals' role in supporting effective and safe access to naloxone.

ROLE OF PHARMACY PROFESSIONALS

Pharmacy professionals are well-positioned to support access to naloxone, especially for individuals who may hesitate to request it due to concerns about stigma or negative perceptions, as well as for those living in rural and remote communities with limited access to harm reduction organizations and facing longer emergency response times.

Pharmacies provide a familiar, trusted environment, making them an accessible, low-stigma entry point for people who might not seek naloxone elsewhere. The College expects pharmacy professionals to respond to naloxone requests with a non-judgmental, patient-centred approach, which includes:

- Complying with applicable standards of practice.
- Responding to information requests from patients and other interested parties.
- Ensuring naloxone is sufficiently stocked and available in both injectable and nasal spray formulations.
- Maintaining continuing education and training to support dispensing of naloxone and counselling on opioid overdose response.
- Initiating naloxone conversations when dispensing opioids or other medications associated with overdose risk, as a routine component of medication counselling.
- Providing individuals with information on accessing harm reduction organizations or community centres offering free naloxone kits when cost is a barrier.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Ontario College of Pharmacists (OCP) — [Guidance for Pharmacy Professionals who are Dispensing or Selling Naloxone](#)
- College of Pharmacists of British Columbia (CPBC) — [Naloxone Training \(PowerPoint\); Checklist for Naloxone Training](#)
- Canadian Pharmacists Association — [Naloxone resources on the Opioid Crisis page](#)
- Ontario HIV Treatment Network (Resuscitation Evidence) — [RR108 Opioid Overdose](#)
- Health Canada - <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/opioids/naloxone.html>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - [Talking about Naloxone with Patients Prescribed Opioids.pdf](#)