** Prescribing Naloxone to Prevent Overdose Deaths**

Dear Arizona Prescriber:

On May 12, 2016, Governor Doug Ducey signed legislation to expand access to naloxone in order to curb fatal overdoses. House Bill 2355 allows licensed prescribers to prescribe, dispense, and distribute naloxone directly or through a standing order to a person at risk of an opioid overdose, their friends and loved ones, and any person who may be in a position to assist. The law allows for certain liability protections that previously did not exist for third party prescribing of naloxone, and the only requirement is that you instruct the individual to summon emergency medical services either immediately before or after administering naloxone.

Arizona had the tenth highest overdose death rate in the nation in 2014, with over 1200 lives lost to accidental overdose (CDC). The majority of overdose deaths involved a prescription opioid or heroin, highlighting the need for greater naloxone availability, among other prevention strategies, in combating this major public health issue. Naloxone distribution beyond first responders is shown to decrease overdose deaths in communities by as much as 37-90%. It is crucial that it be available and accessible.

Naloxone is a safe opioid antagonist that restores breathing by dislodging the opioids from the opioid receptors in the brain temporarily. It is not a controlled substance, it has no addictive or psychoactive properties and it has few side effects. It has no effect on people who do not have opioids in their system. Individuals who regularly use opioids may experience withdrawal symptoms when given naloxone, particularly if higher doses are administered. These withdrawal symptoms, though unpleasant, are not life threatening, while the respiratory depression that occurs in opioid overdose can be fatal without prompt intervention

As respected and knowledgeable health care providers, you are well positioned to substantially increase access to naloxone and promote opioid safety. It takes a multi-faceted approach to end overdose fatalities, and educating patients on opioid safety with naloxone is a proven and effective step. You can truly make a difference in the lives of Arizonans. Thank you for all you do!

To review the new law: <http://www.azleg.gov/legtext/52leg/2r/bills/hb2355h.pdf>

Naloxone product guide: <http://prescribetoprevent.org/wp2015/wp-content/uploads/Naloxone-product-chart.16_01_21.pdf>

Educational handouts for naloxone recipients: <http://prescribetoprevent.org/patient-education/materials/>

More resources, such as a prescribing and dispensing guide: <http://prescribetoprevent.org/prescribers/palliative/>

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