

Indiana Naloxone Project brings training to police and jail officers

By Abby Tonsing 812-331-4245 | atonsing@heraldt.com | Posted: Thursday, January 7, 2016 4:00 pm

If there was an auto-injector pen that could save a person's life in a car accident, everyone would carry one.

Remove the stigma of addiction, and naloxone is that antidote to heroin and opioid drug overdoses, Christopher Abert, of the Indiana Recovery Alliance, told a room full of police officers at the Indiana University Police Department station on Bloomington's campus.

Neurosurgical nurse Donna Purviance agreed. "If somebody's in trouble, you've got to help them. Because this is a disease."

Local police officers and jail officers received training in how to administer naloxone in its nasal spray form Wednesday evening during a presentation by the Indiana Attorney General's Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention Task Force.

At about the same time, police officers and paramedics out in the field used Narcan, a brand name for naloxone, to revive two people who had overdosed on heroin. The heroin overdoses happened about 30 minutes apart Wednesday evening.

A 41-year-old man was found unresponsive in a restroom at Taco Bell, at 309 N. Walnut St., at 7:34 p.m. Ambulance personnel from IU Health Bloomington Hospital administered the antidote drug, and the man became responsive. At the hospital, he told police he had injected heroin, according to Bloomington Police Department Sgt. Joe Crider.

Less than 30 minutes later, police and medics were called to a report of an unresponsive woman found at the Monroe County Public Library. First responders revived the 30-year-old woman, and police say they found a syringe in her purse. After her trip to the hospital, she was taken to the jail on two arrest warrants and on preliminary charges of possession of paraphernalia and false informing.

>>How naloxone works



Naloxone training

Nurse practitioner and Indiana Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention Task Force member, Donna Purviance, gave a training seminar to Monroe County police agencies and first responders on how to properly administer naloxone to drug overdose victims at the Indiana University Police Training Room in, Bloomington, Wednesday, January 6, 2016. Chris Howell | Herald-Times

During an overdose on heroin or prescription painkillers, a person's central nervous system is depressed. Breathing slows or comes to a stop; the heart rate drops. Skin, fingernails and lips can turn blue. Eye pupils become small, like pinpoints. A person does not respond when shaken.

Administering naloxone reverses these effects within five minutes, knocking the opioid off the brain's receptors and causing the person to go into instant withdrawal.

On Wednesday evening, Purviance likened administering nasal-spray naloxone to using over-the-counter nose spray from the store. "You can do this. It's that simple."

She showed the officers how to remove safety tabs and affix the nose-spray topper to the syringe of naloxone. One syringe holds two milliliters and should be administered in both nostrils, if possible.

Anyone who uses opioids is at risk of overdosing, from the child who accidentally finds an adult's prescription pill bottle to the football player who becomes addicted to painkillers after an injury.

"This is your niece out here, your grandmother. This could be you," Abert said.

The attorney general's office on Thursday awarded a total of \$127,000 to three Indiana nonprofit organizations to provide similar training and distribute naloxone to first responders. The Indiana Naloxone Project, a Bloomington-based organization registered with the Indiana State Department of Health to distribute naloxone kits, will receive \$25,000 to serve Monroe, Brown, Jackson and Lawrence counties.

Purviance also detailed Indiana Senate Bill 227, the 2014 law that gives first responders the right to administer, with immunity from civil liability, an overdose intervention drug to someone suffering from an overdose.

Citing increased rates of hepatitis C infections and heroin overdoses, the Monroe County Health Department declared a public emergency in August 2015. By the year's end, Monroe County became the fourth Indiana county to begin a state-approved needle exchange program.

-- HT reporter Lauren Slavin contributed to this report.