



Nursing



## Preventing Harms from Drug Use is Even More Important During the COVID-19 Pandemic

As a pharmacist, you play an integral part in keeping your community safe and healthy. Adopting a harm reduction approach to the opioid epidemic will keep people who use drugs out of the hospital, which is even more critical now with COVID-19.

### “Why the focus on the syringe, naloxone, and buprenorphine access now? Isn’t COVID-19 more important?”

- Keeping people out of emergency departments and the hospital will provide more medical resources for COVID-19 patients<sup>1</sup>
- People who use drugs may be more likely to contract and experience serious complications from COVID-19
- Providing access to syringes can reduce disease complications including endocarditis, cellulitis, abscesses, HIV, and Hepatitis C

### We discussed current practices and common issues with NH pharmacists. Selling syringes was the most variable practice. Here are some strategies pharmacies have implemented to reduce drug related harms:

- Engage people purchasing syringes in collaborative conversations to say that you need their help to continue to safely sell syringes. Ask that they not use on site and safely dispose of syringes
- Provide information on substance use treatment and overdose prevention in your restroom for confidential access to treatment <sup>2</sup>
- If someone does overdose in your pharmacy, you are in a **unique situation to save a life** through administering naloxone before first responders arrive. Ensure you have a dedicated kit easily accessible
- Provide a sharps container in your restroom or at the pharmacy counter to decrease improper disposal and keep your staff safe <sup>3</sup>
- When dispensing syringes, provide information to patients about how to safely dispose of syringes. Visit [dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/bchs/std/documents/sspbrochure.pdf](https://dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/bchs/std/documents/sspbrochure.pdf) to print free brochures from NH DHHS, or email [NHBIDC@dhhs.nh.gov](mailto:NHBIDC@dhhs.nh.gov) for printed copies

#### Reference List

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3. Wolfson-Stofko B, Bennett AS, Elliott L, Curtis R. Drug use in business bathrooms: An exploratory study of manager encounters in New York City. *Int J Drug Policy.* 2017;39:69-77. doi:10.1016/j.drugpo.2016.08.014

This work is funded in part by the CDC, Overdose Data to Action Grant, CDC-RFA-CE19-1904, award to the NH Dept. of Health and Human Services, Div. of Public Health Services, Maternal and Child Health Section

May 2020

