

1. Why is opioid addiction more important than alcoholism? Isn't alcoholism a bigger problem?

Ideally, anyone with a substance use problem should have access to treatment and recovery support services. However, opioid overdoses are the leading cause of accidental death for U.S. adults surpassing motor vehicle crashes.

2. Is there overlap between all these addictions?

It's not unusual for people to have problems with multiple different substances; however, the respiratory depression that can be caused by opioids make them particularly deadly. The Narcan, a lifesaving medication, this grant provides can reverse that respiratory depression and save lives.

3. Why are wasting money on this? If people want to do drugs, why do we want to save them from an overdose?

This issue is of great fiscal importance to our community. If people with substance use problems get the help they need, our community will be healthier and more productive. People in recovery can work, go to school, raise their own children – they become contributing members of our society rather than over-burdening our jails, healthcare resources, and child welfare system. Also, remember, people do recover from this disease. It's not easy but it happens every day.

4. Why is EMS doing follow-up visits if there's no place to send people for treatment?

We've already had some really great success stories where EMS has been able to pair overdose survivors with Peer Recovery Coaches from SACADA. Both the EMS follow-up visits and the Peer Recovery Coaching are completely free of charge because of the funding this grant provides, and additional funding received by SACADA. Admittedly, more funding is needed to ensure that anyone who needs treatment services is able to access them. We can do this work for \$12-16 dollars a day with state and private funders.

5. How expensive is the treatment?

The Center for Healthcare Services has some state-funded treatment slots for folks who qualify. Other centers here in town can provide medication assisted treatment for as low as \$12-16 dollars a day. We are hopeful there will be additional treatment slots funded by the state and other agencies in the future. Further, UTH San Antonio School of Nursing and the local non-profit Crosspoint, Inc. is currently partnering on a new program called Casa Mia which provides recovery housing and support services for women and children. Casa Mia is grant funded and completely free of charge.

6. Is there medicine for opioid addiction?

Yes, there is very effective, FDA approved medication for treating opioid use disorder. Further, the UTHSA Med School has a new program that provides training for healthcare providers who are interested in prescribing these lifesaving medications.

7. Why do you think giving out Narcan will help slow the opioid epidemic?

There's only one criterion that must be met to enter long-term recovery. You have to be alive. While admittedly, Narcan alone will not solve all of our problems, it can keep folks alive until they're ready to seek treatment and recovery services. We've already had multiple stories about folks having Narcan with them and saving the life of a loved one. This is all about being prepared and then taking advantage of that opportunity to offer a path to recovery.

8. Is Narcan addictive?

Narcan has no psychoactive or addictive qualities and few side effects. The drug is harmless if given in error for the wrong type of overdose. Narcan works by bumping the opioids of the opioid receptors and then preventing them from reattaching. It's like getting the wrong key stuck in a lock. The person wakes up and begins breathing again.

9. Aren't we putting our first responders in danger? How can they trust a person who is high to respond safely in a life-threatening emergency?

Administering Narcan is simple. It comes in several formulations but with grant we're purchasing Narcan Nasal spray which is very easy to use. The nozzle is inserted into a nostril and the plunger is pressed. The person doesn't need to be breathing for it to work. Research shows that Narcan is easy enough for a person to administer without instructions even in a situation as stressful as an overdose. And Narcan already has an outstanding track record: since 1996, over 10,000 overdose reversals have been performed using it.

10. Won't surviving an overdose with naloxone encourage someone to keep using?

Research shows that Narcan not only does NOT encourage drug use but has been shown to decrease it in some circumstances. By blocking the effects of opioids, Narcan can produce really unpleasant withdrawal symptoms. Certainly, no one would intentionally want to experience this, especially a drug user.

11. Will Narcan keep drug users from seeking treatment?

The idea here is to save lives. People can't seek treatment if they're no longer alive. Naloxone gives people another chance to get the help they need when they're ready. The experience of almost dying and being saved with Narcan can be a pretty powerful motivator to seek help.