

Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia

Media Release

27 April 2023

LIFESAVING NALOXONE INTRODUCED IN SA PUBLIC HOSPITALS

A free lifesaving medicine for those at risk of an opioid overdose is being introduced in Adelaide's southern suburbs as part of a nationwide program aimed at tackling opioid-related deaths.

Take Home Naloxone is a \$19.6 million Federal Government initiative that is being delivered across the country over four years (with nearly \$5 million available in ongoing annual funding), with Southern Adelaide Local Health Network (SALHN) leading the roll out in South Australia's public hospital system.

Naloxone is a medicine that works by temporarily blocking opioid drugs such as oxycodone from attaching to the receptors in the brain. It can be the decider between life and death in instances of opioid overdose and adverse reaction as it allows time for emergency services to arrive on scene and treatment to begin.

Currently, Take Home Naloxone is being provided for free and without a prescription from community pharmacies registered for the program across the state.

From Friday 28 April 2023, patients at Flinders Medical Centre and Noarlunga Hospital emergency departments identified as at risk of an opioid overdose or adverse reaction will be given Naloxone free of charge to take home.

The medicine will also be provided on prescription, free of charge, to all other eligible patients who are at risk of an opioid overdose across SALHN sites, including the Repat Health Precinct.

It is available as an injection or nasal spray and can be administered by anyone, if the person in need is unable to do it themselves.

The nationwide rollout follows a successful trial that was carried out in South Australia, New South Wales and Western Australia between December 2019 and June 2022 which showed that Naloxone saved up to three lives per day.

In 2020, more than half of the 1,654 unintentional drug-induced deaths across Australia involved opioids. The Federal Government's Take Home Naloxone program is one measure being taken to help tackle rising instances of opioid-related fatalities.

It is anticipated that the introduction of Take Home Naloxone across SALHN will save lives and curb the costs of opioid related hospital presentations on the public health system, which is estimated to be \$5.6 million each year in South Australia.

For more information

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Quotes attributable to DASSA Clinical Director, Dr Victoria Cock:

Accidental overdose is a common cause of death among people who use opioid medicines, such as oxycodone. Almost two-thirds of individuals who accessed naloxone from pharmacies during the pilot trial identified as being on prescription opioids. By increasing free access to naloxone through SALHN, we can help stop these accidental overdoses becoming fatal.

Naloxone can be the difference between life and death and that is why expanding the roll out of the Take Home Naloxone program is important.

Quotes attributable to SALHN CEO, Kerrie Freeman:

We are proud to be leading the way with the roll out of the Take Home Naloxone program here in South Australia's public hospital system as it can and will help to save the lives of residents across the southern Adelaide community.

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