Opioid Use Overdose Simulation for Preprofessional Health Care Students

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**Background**

Recent Lehigh County, Pennsylvania Data

Naloxone is used by emergency medical services (EMS) 2.5-3 times per day.
City of Allentown EMS averages 39 opioid overdose hospital transports per month.
Opio Ide Use Disorder (OUD) “warm handoffs” to treatment centers increased 44%.

Drug related overdose deaths decreased 14%.

While the drug related overdose death decrease is encouraging, PA continues to have the third-highest rate of drug overdose deaths in the U.S. (CDC). One of the key barriers to addressing the opioid crisis is the lack of access to appropriate treatment due to stigma. As such, Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN) designed an educational intervention for future health care providers aimed at avoiding stigmatizing behaviors and promoting hopeful language.

**Methods**

LVHN created an opioid overdose simulation as a partnership of a larger Collective Impact Fellowship project funded by The Rider-Pool Foundation.
Community partners included law enforcement, Lehigh County Drug & Alcohol Department and a prevention provider. The LVHN Department of Education worked collaboratively with these entities to create, implement and sustain the program. The program exposes high school and college students to the interprofessional health care team that would care for the overdose patient from EMS to the staff of the Emergency Department to the treatment center handling the “warm handoff” to a treatment center. Students observe, listen and reflect upon the compassionate attitudes, non-stigmatizing behaviors and hopeful communication among members of the health care team, the patient and family.

**Program Design**

This immersive education experience includes:
- Heroin and Opioid Prevention Education (HOPE) programming provided by The Center for Humanistic Change
- LVHN created video (cost $7,500 and funded by The Dorothy Rider Pool Health Care Trust)
- Live simulation in a realistic hospital setting utilizing standardized patients and “real” medical professionals
- Facilitator’s guide with pre-brief, debrief and simulation scripts
- Electronic pre/post testing

LVHN created video (cost $7,500 and funded by The Dorothy Rider Pool Health Care Trust) programming provided by The Center for Humanistic Research.

**Results**

Initial data analysis of 153 pre/post surveys found:
- Increased hopefulness that overdose survivors can enter into long-term recovery
- Increased sense of future self-efficacy as a positive influence on the OUD epidemic
- Changes in messaging from the use of individual recovery appeals to social recovery appeals

**Conclusions/Next Steps**

By educating preprofessional health care students about the disease of addiction and the hope for recovery, stigma may be reduced as learners discover how compassion and hopeful language are used in encouraging patients to access treatment. Future work includes expansion of this programming to a larger professional health care community and conducting qualitative research to better determine which aspects of the immersive education impact participants’ hope and hopeful language.

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- The Dorothy Rider Pool Health Care Trust
- The Rider-Pool Foundation

**References**
