

RHODE ISLAND PHARMACIES OFFER NARCAN WITHOUT PRESCRIPTION

All CVS Caremark's 60 pharmacies and Walgreen's 26 pharmacies in Rhode Island are offering customers the opportunity to purchase the opiate antidote Narcan (Naloxone) without a prescription. The program involves a collaborative agreement with a doctor who writes a "blanket prescription". Once a pharmacist completes the training program, he or she signs the agreement with the doctor. The pharmacist will advise customers on how to recognize a drug overdose, call 911 and administer the drug. Narcan can be administered as a nasal spray or an injection and CVS will offer both, but the nasal spray is expected to be much more widely used. A CVS spokesperson was quoted saying, "It will be like getting a flu shot," and "You will be able to walk in and not need a prescription."

If the effort is successful in Rhode Island CVS will consider expanding it to other states. At present, 7 states and 9 cities have approved non-prescription sales of Naloxone. NYS is not included. According to National Association of State EMS Officials (NASEMSO), 19 states currently have Good Samaritan laws granting some level of immunity to people who call 9-1-1 for assistance due to either their own overdose or that of another. In addition, 25 states have laws or programs to allow people, either professional or not, to administer medication to reverse potential opiate-related overdoses. NYS is included in this latter category.

Earlier this year noted EMS raconteur Mike McEvoy commented that with the expansion of nasal Narcan programs it would be unlikely to wake up in a public park without a wet nose.