

Increasing Bystander Naloxone Distribution on Wyoming's Wind River Indian Reservation

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Hypothesis

- Increasing access to naloxone through distribution to bystanders will reduce the burden of opioid related overdose deaths on the the Wind River Indian Reservation



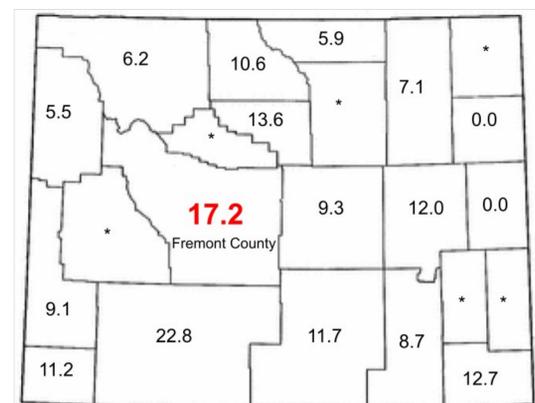
Fort Washakie, Wyoming

Background

- The Wind River Indian Reservation is located in Fremont County in central Wyoming
- Rural and indigenous communities have been disproportionately impacted by the detrimental effects of the opioid epidemic
- Conversations with community partners revealed free naloxone was not being accessed by many eligible to receive it

Literature Review

- Increasing naloxone distribution can decrease opioid related overdose deaths, especially when distribution includes potential bystanders
- Effective distribution of naloxone should leverage existing contact points with the target population
- American Indian and Alaska Native populations had the highest rates of Covid-19 vaccination, demonstrating the potential benefit of public health campaigns that incorporate “ecosystems” of tribal, federal and community organizations
- Public health messaging in indigenous communities should incorporate relevant belief structures and indigenous knowledge



Wyoming overdose death rates by county

Community Partners

- Doya Natsu Healing Center
 - Provides a variety of programs for mental health and addiction recovery
 - Has a robust network of current and former clients
- Wind River Service Unit Indian Health Service (IHS) Clinic
 - The primary site of care for the community
 - Pharmacy provides free naloxone to all community members eligible for services at the facility



Work with IHS and Doya Natsu identified a gap in distribution of naloxone to potential bystanders that may witness an overdose

HELP SAVE A LIFE...

Access Narcan® Today

- Narcan® is life saving medication available at...
- Anyone eligible for services at IHS can receive...
- Increasing access to Narcan® among all comm... help reduce overdose deaths related to opioid...

Opioids Overdose & Narcan
Guest Column by Casey Pikla, IHS medical student

It's an honor to share this space as a guest. Over the past year I've been working in and around Fort Washakie as I pursue a medical degree at the University of Washington. During that time I've had the opportunity to connect clinical medicine with community outreach to better understand how we provide for the wellbeing of the community both inside and outside the clinic.

As we observe the National Overdose Awareness Day on August 31st, this is an excellent time to reflect on one of the most effective tools we have to heal the impacts of substance use on the community: harm reduction.

At its heart, harm reduction is about interconnectedness and compassion. It is a web of people, organizations and services that create touchpoints for those with any substance use disorder to access care. Rather than employing harsh punishments for drug use, which fuel destitution, stigma, harm reduction seeks to meet people where they're at, provide education and strategies to reduce the risks they face, and provide opportunities to connect individuals with additional services.

During my time in Fort Washakie I've seen many examples of similarities between the lessons of medical science, and the teachings of traditional knowledge. Both science and traditional knowledge tells us that we live in a world of interconnection. We are bound to the people, plants, animals and environment that surrounds us. We have a responsibility to those connections, to care for them and nurture them. Harm reduction is simply a new word for an old practice.

Harm reduction can take on many forms. It may involve medical facilities, tribal organizations, treatment centers and individuals working together to support the well-being of those in need. It's a collective response that leverages the strengths and threads of a community to provide safer practices, safer settings, safer healthcare access and safer connection to care. One thing everyone can do to practice harm reduction is obtaining a prescription for naloxone (also known by the brand name Narcan®). Naloxone is a potentially lifesaving medication that works by reversing the effects of opioids on the brain and respiratory system. It is a safe medication that can be administered as a nasal spray by anyone witnessing an overdose.

In Fort Washakie, anyone eligible for services at the IHS Clinic can receive a naloxone prescription and training at no cost. Expanding distribution of naloxone in a community has been shown to reduce opioid related overdose deaths and is a powerful step we can all take toward harm reduction. It's also important to reach out to community partners like Doya Natsu for more ways to receive help, provide support, or implement the practices of harm reduction for those struggling with substance use disorder.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) defines harm reduction as a "practical and transformative" approach that incorporates community-driven strategies like prevention, risk reduction, and health promotion, to empower people who use drugs and their families with the choice to live healthy, self-directed, and purpose-filled lives."

Narcan flyer and harm reduction newsletter

Deliverables to Community

- Advertisement created for display on IHS clinic waiting area TV's directing all eligible patients to obtain naloxone
- A guest article on harm reduction and accessing naloxone published in Doya Natsu monthly newsletter
- Flyers for distribution at prominent community sites

Distribution and Next Steps

- Work with service unit contractor to broadcast advertisement in waiting room
- Newsletter distributed and promoted on social media