

Just over half of Michigan pharmacies offer overdose-fighting naloxone without prescription

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Despite the ability of any Michigan pharmacy to dispense medication to combat opioid overdose without writing prescriptions, slightly more than

half of pharmacies in the state offer the drug in such a way.

The [standing order for naloxone](#), commonly known as Narcan, was passed by the Michigan legislature in 2016. This allows any pharmacist to dispense the overdose reversal drug without a prescription—allowing friends, [family members](#) or other individuals to obtain [naloxone](#) for emergency use.

Researchers at Michigan Medicine conducted a survey of 662 standing order pharmacies for the paper published in the *American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse*. Findings reveal that just [54% of Michigan pharmacies](#) offer naloxone without requiring a prescription.

"Our county maps reveal that areas with higher fatality rates had fewer pharmacies participating in the standing order or lacked any nearby [pharmacy](#) access," said Chin Hwa (Gina) Dahlem, Ph.D., FNP-C, FAANP, lead author of the paper, nurse practitioner and a researcher at the University of Michigan School of Nursing. "Naloxone is a life-saving medication for a person experiencing an [opioid overdose](#). We need to continue our efforts to expand naloxone access through pharmacies, hospitals and community naloxone distribution programs to prevent overdose deaths."

Among pharmacies participating in the standing order in eight southeastern Michigan counties, 85% percent actually had naloxone available and 82% had ever dispensed it.

"It's not just enough to participate in the standing order, but you also have to have naloxone available on the shelves in those moments when somebody asks for it," said Keith Kocher, M.D., M.P.H., senior author of the paper and an emergency physician at University of Michigan Health. "The more pharmacies make naloxone available and have it on the shelves, the more likely we can get it into the hands of individuals at

risk for an overdose to reduce harm and death from opioids."

More information: Chin Hwa Dahlem et al, Factors associated with naloxone availability and dispensing through Michigan's pharmacy standing order, *The American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse* (2022). [DOI: 10.1080/00952990.2022.2047714](https://doi.org/10.1080/00952990.2022.2047714)

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