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Role of addiction specialists in prevention of opioid overdose deaths

Recently there has been epidemic of opioid use disorders in certain parts of world and hence the mortality associated with opioid overdose. Different studies show that opioid overdose is generally witnessed; death takes a while and is generally due to respiratory failure. Addiction is a chronic relapsing disorder where even a recovering patient can relapse anytime and die of opioid overdose. Considering the fact that a large number of OUD patients come to addiction specialist for treatment, these physicians can play a major role in reducing the mortality of OUD by educating the patients and their significant others against opioid overdose and prescribing Naloxone to them in addition to other addiction medicines. They can keep Naloxone at a safe place and use it in case they witness an opioid overdose and save a life. Naloxone a pure opioid antagonist is very safe, reliable, cheap, easily available and fast acting drug. Naloxone causes reversal of sedation and respiratory depression associated with opioid overdose within minutes and it has no side effects of its own even in higher doses. Recently newer preparation of Naloxone in the form of nasal spray (Narcan) has been approved by FDA to prevent overdose deaths. In some developed countries Naloxone dispensing program is being practiced widely and they have been able to minimize the mortality associated with opioid overdose. Also there is Good Samaritan law being implemented in these countries where even a layman can give Naloxone in case of witnessed opioid overdose. Unfortunately in certain parts of world including India there is yet no hold of OEND even in tertiary health care centers.

Biography

Jaswinder Singh Gandhi has completed his Fellowship and is a Certified Drug De-addiction Specialist. He has 15 years of experience in drug addiction field. He is a Member of ASAM, NAADAC, ISAM, IPS, IMA, ISA, ISCCM and ISSM. He is certified by International Society of Addiction Medicine in Substance Use Disorders. He has attended many national and international conferences. He has written two books against drug addiction and developed an interactive software SANTAM helping patients as well as physicians in diagnosis and treatment of substance use disorder.

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