



October 24, 2017

Sheriff Bolanos and Police Chiefs in San Mateo County,

We're sorry that we can't be at your November meeting to discuss this personally, but we can attend subsequent meetings if there is interest.

Narcan is an opioid antagonist and can reverse overdose due to heroin, prescription opioids and illicitly obtained opioids. There has been a nationwide push to have law enforcement carry this drug.

The San Mateo County (SMC) Health Department has been looking closely at patterns of opioid prescribing within San Mateo County for about four years. About two years ago, the Health Department began including opioid and other substance use death data as a measure for surveillance of opioid use and abuse. The Narcotics Task Force closely monitors all illegal drug use in the county. While SMC certainly faces many challenges related to opioid use and abuse, the County does not seem to be experiencing anywhere near the same level of morbidity and mortality that other jurisdictions in the United States are experiencing.

We have been made aware of many requests locally for police to carry this medication. Almost all of the requests have been made in order to protect potentially exposed officers, not to carry it for the protection of the public. Indeed, after looking at 20 months of data, we could not find a single incident where officers carrying Narcan would have changed the outcome of a patient. Again, if you look at the situation locally, we are not even remotely experiencing the level of harm seen in other areas of the US.

There are two models you can rely on to make this medication more available. One is to deploy it among all your staff, or a targeted subset of your staff. Training law enforcement in how to deliver naloxone via intramuscular and intranasal route can be done as families have been trained to deliver naloxone via these two routes. The other model is to use existing Emergency Medical Services (EMS) resources. Your decision on whether to deploy this medication amongst your staff must meet the EMS standards dictated by Title 22, Division 9, Chapter 1.5 and the San Mateo County EMS Policy, Personnel 6. Justifiable arguments to use either model in this county can be made. We believe the medical outcomes associated with either model are very likely to be equivalent.

Our best medical advice is, in this county based on what we're seeing now, that officers rely on the existing EMS process, utilizing EMS personnel to administer and use the existing caches of Narcan that currently reside within fire rigs and ambulances. We have experience with trying to supply all officers with medications. For over 10 years we attempted to supply all officers with auto-injectors for nerve agent exposure. It was an extremely complicated logistical task. We reverted to caching this medication within the EMS response system after these 10 years of trying to keep officers supplied with their own chemical nerve agent antidotes. We believe using the existing EMS process is the most efficient and sustainable model for us to use based on our existing conditions. We, along with the Narcotics Task

Force, and our state and federal partners are closely monitoring the local conditions with surveillance systems that are designed to identify changes in trends in heroin use, fentanyl prevalence, and introductions of new opioid drugs into our county. Should local conditions change, we will notify you.

If you do decide to have your officers carry Narcan, based on political, philosophical, or operational considerations, you have our support to do so. But if you go this route, we expect a single standard of practice. Therefore, we expect that all police departments that deploy Narcan to staff, follow exactly, the guidelines, training, logistical, and regulatory requirements set forth by the Sheriff's office. The Sheriff's office will be work closely with Dr. Greg Gilbert, our EMS Medical Director, to ensure these requirements are met. These are currently in development and will be shared with you shortly. Feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

Thank you for all your continuing efforts in keeping our county healthy and safe.

-Original signed by-

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County Health Officer

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Greg Gilbert MD
EMS Medical Director