

Naloxone to be distributed to opioid addicts

By Sarah Sobanski

A new program is looking to quell the use of opioids in Ontario.

Hastings Prince Edward Public Health (HPEPH) will distribute Naloxone in local communities as a part of its Lifesaver Program. The program hopes to reach drug users before they overdose.

This comes at a time when the health unit suggests Canada is facing a drug safety crisis. Over the past 13 years the opioid overdose have seen a continued climbing trend in Ontario.

Launching this fall, the program will be offered to those who are currently using opioids or have a history of using opioids. It will offer Lifesaver kits to administer Naloxone in the case of an emergency.

HPEPH reported Naloxone as a safe, effective and non-addictive medication that reverses the potentially fatal effects of an opioid overdose. It said Naloxone blocks the effects of opioids by temporarily replacing them in the brain's receptor sites and restoring normal breathing in the victim.

The health unit estimated that 50,000 Ontarians are addicted to opioids. As many as 675 Ontarians died from opioid-related deaths in 2014.

Opioids can be found in heroin, fentanyl, morphine, oxycodone, methadone, hydrocodone or Vicodin, and codeine.

The program will train clients in the signs of overdose and application of Naloxone. It also teach the importance of contacting emergency services in case of an overdose. The goal is to stop preventable deaths.

Kingston Frontenac Lennox and Addington Public Health launched the Lifesaver Program in September 2015. It distributed 300 kits which saved 25 lives. The program was also launched by the Leeds and Grenville Public Health Unit in the winter of 2014. It saved 11 lives and distributed 95 kits.