

Occupational Therapist Saves Life Thanks to Opioid Overdose Simulation Training

By Therese Kroeger, BSN, RN, acute care nurse educator at the Cincinnati VA Medical Center



(Rachel Steiner and naloxone rescue kit. Photography provided by Rachel Steiner)

In an emergency, it is believed that people will **react based on how they have been trained**. An employee at the Cincinnati VA Medical Center (CVAMC) proved that statement to be true after their actions helped save someone from an overdose.

Rachel Steiner, an occupational therapist in the CVAMC's U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program, participated in a locally developed simulation training program last year that teaches participants how to recognize and safely respond to opioid overdose incidents. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates there were more than 100,000 overdose deaths within a 12-month period ending in April 2021 (CDC, 2021).

The statistics proved that the training Steiner received was timely and necessary. HUD-VASH employees who completed the program received a naloxone rescue kit with personal protective equipment (PPE) and two doses of intranasal naloxone, a medicine used to reverse the life-threatening effects of a known or suspected narcotic overdose.

Four months after Steiner received the training, she drove past a man lying on the ground outside the CVAMC HUD-VASH community outreach division building in November 2021. She observed others huddled around the man and deduced that it was a possible overdose situation. She stopped her car,

grabbed her naloxone rescue kit, and ensured first responders were called. Steiner reported the man had a weak pulse and was not breathing. Having been trained to respond to overdose situations, Steiner paused long enough to put on her PPE before she administered the first dose of intranasal naloxone. After two minutes, Rachel administered the second dose and delivered rescue breaths through the one-way valve mask provided in her rescue kit. Within a few minutes, first responders showed up and took over bringing the patient back to consciousness. Had Steiner not reacted quickly, he may not have survived. Steiner's courageous response serves as an example of the importance of simulation in health care training. SimLEARN offers a wide range of courses that can be adapted to local medical centers and facilities. [CLICK HERE](#) to see what upcoming courses may be most beneficial to you or your medical center. At the time of this publication, Steiner had transferred to the VA in Colorado Springs to be closer to the mountains.

References:

Drug overdose deaths in the U.S. top 100,000 annually. (2021, November 17). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/nchs_press_releases/2021/20211117.htm