

Staff Writer

mgulbas1@binghamton.edu

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Students practice using naloxone, learn to help overdose victims

Students for Sensible Drug Policy, Lambda Upsilon Lambda fraternity host a Narcan certification class

By MELANIE GULBAS - NOVEMBER 1, 2018



Rebecca Kiss/Photography Editor

Alexis Pleus, founder of Truth Pharm, speaks to students about naloxone and how to utilize it at a Narcan certification event on Tuesday.

In 2017, Broome County Emergency Medical Services administered naloxone a total of 353 times, according to the New York State County Opioid Quarterly Report. On Tuesday, several students learned how to use the drug and became certified to help people during an overdose.

Naloxone is a drug used to reverse an opioid overdose by halting potentially fatal respiratory depression during an overdose, allowing a drug user to be revived intravenously or through a nasal application of the drug. At the certification event, students learned about Narcan, a brand of the drug. Hosted by Students for Sensible Drug Policy (SSDP) and Lambda Upsilon Lambda Fraternity and presented by Truth Pharm, a national advocacy and nonprofit organization that makes an effort to reduce the stigma surrounding substance abuse, the event taught students how to nasally administer Narcan to an overdose victim.

Narcan is safe for anyone to use; however, getting certified helps teach people how to use it in emergency situations, when it can be difficult to think clearly, especially if the victim is a friend or family member. Additionally, although the drug can save a person from an overdose, it only stays in their system for 30 to 90 minutes. Therefore, it is imperative that responders stay with the person for a few hours after administering the drug to monitor them, as another overdose can occur once the naloxone leaves their system. According to Abigail Bandl, an undeclared freshman, it is critical that everyone has knowledge on how to properly utilize Narcan in case of an emergency.

“Narcan is amazing,” Bandel said. “It brings you back to life, but it’s sad that it has to be used so

frequently because of the opioid epidemic.”

At the event, Truth Pharm provided each attendee with their own certification card and a kit featuring two doses of the Narcan nasal spray. Alexis Pleus, the founder of Truth Pharm, spoke at the event and said she lost her son to a heroin overdose, which is why she wants to prevent others from losing a loved one to substance abuse. According to Pleus, the organization’s goal is to save lives.

In December 2017, Truth Pharm started giving out Narcan kits with certifications, and so far, three kits have been used to save four lives. Rickchild Pyram, vice president of SSDP and a senior majoring in political science, said Truth Pharm’s mission statement, which encompasses advocacy for policies that will affect change in the treatment of people with substance use disorders, is an important message for BU students and the public.

“I want to be able to give the BU community the knowledge and ability for harm reduction,” Pyram said.

According to Matthew Mandel, president of SSDP and a sophomore majoring in philosophy, politics and law, his group works closely with Truth Pharm to raise awareness for substance abuse.

“Truth Pharm has been an important organization in helping us educate students on campus on what to do in the event of an overdose,” Mandel said.

Sean Tully, a freshman majoring in history, said he works as a lifeguard and is involved with a fire department in his hometown, which makes it important for him to be certified.

“It can’t hurt for people to learn how to use it because it’s helped so many people already,” Tully said.

Mandel said he hopes more people will become educated on how to use naloxone.

“It’s very easy to use, has hardly any adverse effects and doesn’t negatively impact those not suffering from an overdose,” Mandel said. “It’s a simple tool that could potentially save a life.”