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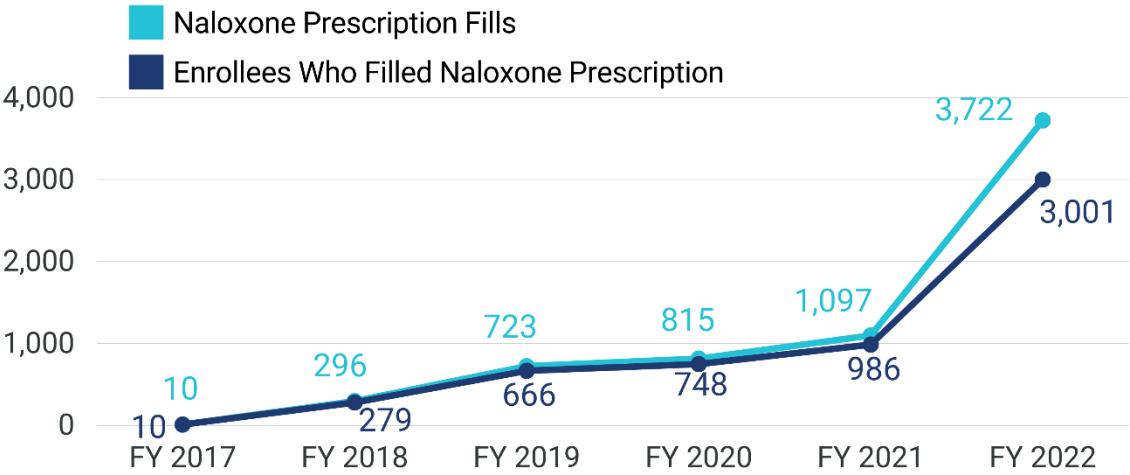
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ACHI ANALYSIS SHOWS NALOXONE PRESCRIPTION FILLS IN NWA TRIPLED IN 1 YEAR

LITTLE ROCK – Prescription fills of the opioid overdose-reversal drug naloxone in Northwest Arkansas tripled from fiscal year 2021 to 2022, according to a new analysis from the Arkansas Center for Health Improvement.

ACHI found that naloxone prescription fills in Benton, Carroll, Madison and Washington counties jumped from 1,097 in fiscal year 2021 to 3,722 in fiscal year 2022. The increase followed the implementation, under Arkansas Act 651 of 2021, of a new requirement that health care providers in the state co-prescribe naloxone when prescribing high-dose opioids and in certain other circumstances.

NORTHWEST ARKANSAS NALOXONE PRESCRIPTION FILLS AND ENROLLEES WHO FILLED A NALOXONE PRESCRIPTION



SOURCE: Arkansas All-Payer Claims Database



Statewide, the increase was even greater. Naloxone prescription fills across Arkansas quadrupled, jumping from 5,575 in fiscal year 2021 to 25,987 in fiscal year 2022.

“Our legislators, health care providers, and advocates are working hard to combat the devastating impacts of the opioid epidemic in communities in Northwest Arkansas and across the state, and we continue to support their efforts,” said ACHI President and CEO Dr. Joe Thompson. “The challenge before us remains significant, and there is more work to do to reduce the number of Arkansans dying from opioid overdoses.”

The number of Arkansans statewide filling opioid prescriptions was 35% lower in 2022 than five years earlier, dropping from 367,702 in 2017 to 238,440 last year. Prescription fills of high-dose opioids, defined as dosages of 50 or more morphine milligram equivalents (MME) per day, fell by 52% between 2017 and 2022. Prescription fills of 90 or more MME per day fell by 43% during the same period.

Opioid overdose deaths continue to account for a majority of drug overdose deaths in Arkansas. In calendar year 2021, the most recent year for which data are available, Arkansas experienced 637 drug overdose deaths, of which 386 were opioid-related.

Access to naloxone continues to expand through recent federal and state action. Earlier this year, the Food and Drug Administration announced its approval of an over-the-counter version of naloxone, now available in pharmacies and other retail locations nationwide. Arkansas lawmakers also enacted Act 586 of 2023, which provides more flexibility for health care providers and other organizations to supply naloxone to those at risk of an overdose or family and friends of those at risk of an overdose.

The NaloxHome program, administered by ACHI in partnership with the state drug director and the Arkansas Department of Human Services, supplies free naloxone to participating Arkansas hospitals to dispense to patients at risk of overdose or their caregivers. Since launching in May of 2022, the program has grown to include 47 participating hospitals across the state.

ACHI studied the naloxone and opioid prescription fills of Arkansans with Medicaid or commercial insurance for state fiscal years 2017 to 2022, using data from the Arkansas All-Payer Claims Database, which is part of the Arkansas Healthcare Transparency Initiative. ACHI’s data brief, “Naloxone Prescription in Response to the Opioid Epidemic,” is available on the center’s website at achi.net. Northwest Arkansas-specific findings are available at achi.net/regional-view.

ACHI is a nonpartisan, independent health policy center that serves as a catalyst for improving the health of all Arkansans through evidence-based research, public issue advocacy, and collaborative program development.

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