

From: Coriell, Scott [Scott.Coriell@state.vt.us]
Sent: Wednesday, April 08, 2015 9:49 AM
To: Coriell, Scott
Subject: Gov. Shumlin Urges Maker of Overdose Reversal Drug to Halt Price Spike
Attachments: GPS final naloxone letter.pdf

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 8, 2015

Gov. Shumlin Urges Maker of Overdose Reversal Drug to Halt Price Spike
Price of Life-Saving Drug Increases by 62% in VT

MONTPELIER – Gov. Peter Shumlin and the co-chairs of his Criminal Justice and Substance Abuse Cabinet are urging the maker of the opiate overdose reversal drug naloxone to take steps to stop a price spike that has seen the cost of the drug surge by over 60 percent in Vermont. Other states across the country have reported similar price increases.

As part of his efforts to address the opiate addiction challenges facing Vermont and the rest of the country, Gov. Shumlin proposed and signed legislation that has expanded the availability of naloxone, equipping every Vermont State Trooper with the drug and distributing it to first responders and addiction recovery centers. As a result of those efforts, 1,869 naloxone kits have been dispensed and about 190 have been used to reverse an overdose, according to the Vermont Department of Health.

As naloxone is distributed more widely, the price is increasing. A [New York Times report](#) published late last year found that prices for the drug are spiking by up to 50 percent nationwide. According to the Vermont Department of Health, the cost for 10 doses of naloxone was \$113 in early March 2015. As of yesterday, the price had increased to \$183 per 10 doses, a 62 percent spike. The nationwide price increases come as a new report by the Centers for Disease Control shows that the [number of heroin-related deaths in America has tripled since 2010](#).

In a letter to the CEO of Amphastar, the pharmaceutical company that makes naloxone, the Governor and the co-chairs of his Criminal Justice and Substance Abuse Cabinet, Chittenden County States Attorney T.J. Donovan and Rutland Regional Medical Center CEO Tom Huebner, are urging the company to stop the price spike seen in Vermont and around the country. “We implore your company to stop the steep increase in the price of naloxone, which is threatening our efforts to distribute rescue kits and save lives,” they write. “Opiate addiction is a disease, and in Vermont we are treating it as such. We are reducing the stigma associated with addiction, expanding treatment, and saving lives. The soaring cost of naloxone threatens to thwart our progress.”

The Governor’s letter builds on efforts by Senator Bernie Sanders, who in March joined with Maryland Congressman Elijah Cummings [in sending a letter to Amphastar](#) seeking information about the price the company is charging for naloxone. Sanders, in his letter to Amphastar, noted

that "the rapid increase in the cost of this life-saving medication in such a short time frame is a significant public health concern."

Joining the Governor at a press conference announcing the effort was Howard Center CEO Bob Bick who shared a story of a local college student who almost lost his life due to a heroin overdose. Thankfully, naloxone had been distributed to a friend as part of an overdose rescue kit. The naloxone was used, the overdose was reversed, and the student is currently in treatment.

The full letter sent by the Governor is copied below and attached to this email.

Dear Dr. Zhang,

Just last week, staff from the Howard Center, a drug recovery service organization in Burlington Vermont, met with a local college student who almost lost his life due to a heroin overdose. Thankfully, the drug your company manufactures, naloxone, had been distributed to a friend as part of an overdose rescue kit. The naloxone was used, the overdose was reversed, and the student is currently in treatment and recovery.

The presence of naloxone literally meant the difference between life and death for this young person. That's why we implore your company to stop the steep increase in the price of naloxone, which is threatening our efforts to distribute rescue kits and save lives.

Many have reported that prices for naloxone have increased by 50 percent or more. In Vermont, the Department of Health is reporting that the price has spiked by 62 percent in the last month. This comes at a time when we are trying to get the drug into the hands of those on the front lines of this battle against opiate addiction. Emergency responders and Vermont State Police are now equipped with the drug. Statewide, Vermont has distributed almost 1,900 rescue kits with naloxone. Of those, about 190 have already been used to reverse an overdose.

We, like Vermont's Senator Bernie Sanders, are encouraged by your agreement to provide rebates of \$6 per dose in the state of New York, but we ask that you provide such relief in other states as well.

Opiate addiction is a disease, and in Vermont we are treating it as such. We are reducing the stigma associated with addiction, expanding treatment, and saving lives. The soaring cost of naloxone threatens to thwart our progress.

We urge you to help us by preventing naloxone from being priced out-of-reach for our many public safety and health officials at this critical time in the nationwide fight against heroin abuse.

Sincerely,

Peter Shumlin
Governor

###

PETER SHUMLIN
Governor



State of Vermont
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

April 8, 2015

Jack Y. Zhang, Ph.D.
Chief Executive Officer
Amphastar Pharmaceuticals, Inc.
11570 6th Street
Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91730

Dear Dr. Zhang,

Just last week, staff from the Howard Center, a drug recovery service organization in Burlington Vermont, met with a local college student who almost lost his life due to a heroin overdose. Thankfully, the drug your company manufactures, naloxone, had been distributed to a friend as part of an overdose rescue kit. The naloxone was used, the overdose was reversed, and the student is currently in treatment and recovery.

The presence of naloxone literally meant the difference between life and death for this young person. That's why we implore your company to stop the steep increase in the price of naloxone, which is threatening our efforts to distribute rescue kits and save lives.

Many have reported that prices for naloxone have increased by 50 percent or more. In Vermont, the Department of Health is reporting that the price has spiked by 62 percent in the last month. This comes at a time when we are trying to get the drug into the hands of those on the front lines of this battle against opiate addiction. Emergency responders and Vermont State Police are now equipped with the drug. Statewide, Vermont has distributed almost 1,900 rescue kits with naloxone. Of those, about 190 have already been used to reverse an overdose.

We, like Vermont's Senator Bernie Sanders, are encouraged by your agreement to provide rebates of \$6 per dose in the state of New York, but we ask that you provide such relief in other states as well.

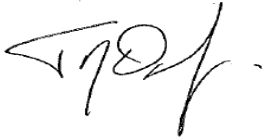
Opiate addiction is a disease, and in Vermont we are treating it as such. We are reducing the stigma associated with addiction, expanding treatment, and saving lives. The soaring cost of naloxone threatens to thwart our progress.

We urge you to help us by preventing naloxone from being priced out-of-reach for our many public safety and health officials at this critical time in the nationwide fight against heroin abuse.

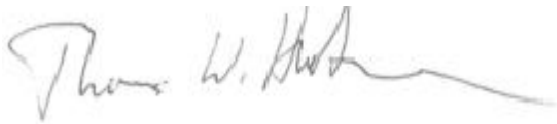
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Peter Shumlin", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Peter Shumlin, Governor

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "TJ Donovan", with a stylized, cursive script.

TJ Donovan, Co-Chair
Governor's Criminal Justice and Substance Abuse Cabinet

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Tom Huebner", with a stylized, cursive script.

Tom Huebner, Co-Chair
Governor's Criminal Justice and Substance Abuse Cabinet