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DRUGS

Capital Health helps cops combat heroin epidemic

By Sulaiman
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HOPEWELL TOWNSHIP » The impact of heroin and the death toll from accidental drug overdoses is as concerning to Mercer County's law-enforcement officials as it is to the local-area doctors who have taken an oath to prevent diseases wherever they can.

At least 55 people died from accidental drug overdoses in Mercer County last year, and at least 25 people in the county have died from an accidental overdose this year, according to the Mercer County Medical Examiner's Office. Many of those deaths were heroin-related.

"We are losing kids; we are losing people constantly, and that is really difficult for us," Al Maghazehe, CEO and



SULAIMAN ABDUR-RAHMAN — THE TRENTONIAN

Hamilton Police receive a fresh supply of Narcan courtesy of the Mercer County Prosecutor's Office and Capital Health at the medical center in Hopewell Township Thursday, Aug. 25, 2016. From left: Hamilton Police Lt. Joseph C. Klimaszewski, Hamilton Police Chief James Collins, Mercer County Acting Prosecutor Angelo Onofri and Capital Health CEO Al Maghazehe.

president of Capital Health, said Thursday in the deadly opioid epidemic. "For all of us who

are in this field, our job is to save people."

Mercer County Acting Prosecutor Angelo On-

ofri has sought to minimize the deadly effects of heroin and other opiate-based substances ever since he had spearheaded an initiative in November 2014 to supply all police agencies in Mercer County with Narcan, a powerful drug that reverses the effects of a heroin overdose.

But that batch of Narcan expired at the end of July, forcing Onofri to supply the police departments with enough additional vials of Narcan until the county could make permanent arrangements to get quick, easy and cost-effective access to large quantities of the life-saving drug on an as-needed basis.

The Mercer County Prosecutor's Office asked Capital Health whether it would be willing to donate free supplies of Narcan replenishments, and the health system happily obliged.



SULAIMAN ABDUR-RAHMAN — THE TRENTONIAN

Mercer County Acting Prosecutor Angelo Onofri demonstrates how Narcan is administered during a press conference at Capital Health Medical Center - Hopewell on Thursday, Aug. 25, 2016.

"When the prosecutor asked us to team up with the county, we obviously welcomed that,"

Maghazehe said Thursday during a press conference with Onofri at the Capital Health Medical Center in Hopewell Township.

"Dr. Maghazehe, we can't thank you enough for supplying the Narcan to all of the police departments here in Mercer County," said Onofri, who then distributed those 530 vials or \$13,000 worth of Narcan to the officers at the press conference.

Narcan deployment

Since the Mercer County Prosecutor's Office implemented its Narcan deployment initiative on Nov. 5, 2014, the powerful drug as of Wednesday has been administered 131 times throughout the county on victims suffering from a drug overdose. The Mercer County stats show 115 of those overdoses were reversed by Narcan, but 10 people died and it was