Prescribe naloxone to combat opioid overdoses
by Trisha Korioth, Staff Writer

As opioid misuse escalates, so do overdoses. Fortunately, lifesaving antidote has emerged. But for naloxone to work, it must be readily available.

New guidance helps doctors decide whether to co-prescribe naloxone with opioids when clinically appropriate. As a member of the American Medical Association Opioid Task Force, the Academy helped develop the guidance (http://bit.ly/naloxoneAAPAMA).

Considerations for co-prescribing naloxone include patient history of high opioid dose; concomitant benzodiazepine prescriptions; history of mental health or medical condition that increases risk for overdose; or substance use disorder. Naloxone prescriptions also can be considered for family members or friends who could help someone who is at risk of opioid overdose.

Naloxone co-prescribing does not increase medical liability risks, and most patients find the prescription offer acceptable, according to the task force. The discussion also opens the door for doctors to address overdose risks and reduce the stigma of substance use disorders.

The Academy has developed national and state fact sheets to visually explain the urgency of the opioid crisis and its impact on children. Get a poster that features by-the-numbers data for your state and recommendations for family-centered policies at http://bit.ly/OpioidFactsAAP.

Community action also can keep opioid medication from falling into the wrong hands. Instruct parents to store medications up and away from children and teens to avoid accidental overdose or misuse. Provide information on how to dispose of unused medication safely through take-back programs, https://www.end-opioid-epidemic.org/storage-and-disposal/.