Use Narcan every time – no exception

The U.S.—especially the Northeast— has been ravaged by opioid abuse in the past few years. Seemingly every other day there are stories of overdoses, deaths, and car accidents for people at the hands of heroin, oxycontin, or some other sinister drug. The proliferation of Narcan—an antidote for opiates—has saved the lives of many addicts. But this remedy is seen, by many, as unnecessary. They argue that it enables drug users and endangers the lives of everyone else by providing second and third chances.

This view is unethical and illogical.

First, let's start with the responsibilities of doctors and first responders. They are not tasked with judging the person that they find incapacitated. Their job is to save lives; there is no demarcation between the lives of the sober or the addicted, or between the righteous or the depraved. If a person has had an overdose, then medical personnel ought to do whatever is in their power to help them. The notion that physicians should make extemporaneous value judgements about the worth of a person's life based on the circumstances surrounding their medical predicament is a terrifying one.

A physician's or first responder's moral framework or ideological leanings should never impinge on their duties. Once you grant the contrary you open yourself to a slew of circumstances. Perhaps a religious obstetrician would decline to deliver a baby conceived out of wedlock. Maybe an animal rights' advocate would refuse to help someone who was injured in a hunting accident. These may seem far-fetched. But they follow logically from the premise of physicians and value judgments. Simply stated: judgement is not part of doctor protocol.

The argument that the saved opioid user could endanger some innocent in the future is not without merit. But this **butterfly-effect style argument** can apply to anybody. If a person suffers from alcohol poisoning, should they have their stomach pumped? They could, after all, get drunk and drive home at some later date. Or what if a career criminal is shot by some rival gang? Should they be saved? Clearly that person may continue their malevolence, perhaps even attempting to exact revenge on the shooter. Would anyone really want these sorts of ethical questions appearing in the minds of the individuals responsible for the health of the populace? The job of the medical professionals is to help people, regardless of how they sustained their injuries.

The odd thing about the butterfly-effect argument (weak though it may be) is that it could also be applied the other way. The person who doctors don't save could've gone on to help someone, perhaps even save someone else's life.

Discussion boards and social media threads surrounding this topic will inevitably produce people who believe that the overdosed should be left to die. This is callous and short-sighted and lends no credence to the very real fact that addiction is a disease. These people are more than junkies; they are human beings with families, friends, backstories, and dreams. They have arrived at an unfortunate place, but to leave them to die is unethical.

Addiction is a disease. Many people are genetically predisposed to addiction and alcoholism. Some have "addictive personalities" where there is a penchant to invest themselves utterly into whichever habit or hobby grabs their attention. This is a psychological quirk, akin to any other state of mind or condition, whether innocuous or nefarious. To wish death upon them is to begrudge someone for something beyond their control.

This Narcan issue has revealed a frightening faction of social

Darwinists and unethical individualists who think drug abusers would be best relegated to the discard. This is unconscionable. Narcan saves lives. Our job as a society should be to educate people before they use and to help those who have lost their way.

Drug addicts are human beings. To wish death upon them is to demonstrate a staggering lack of empathy– a sort of overdose of inhumanity. If only there were a Narcan for that.