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California First Responders to Receive \$1.5 Million Worth of Anti-Opioid Drug Under Settlement Reached by California State Board of Pharmacy

The California State Board of Pharmacy has reached a unique legal settlement requiring McKesson Corp. to provide \$1.5 million worth of free naloxone, a medication that reverses opioid overdose, to first responders and similar nonprofit agencies in California.

In addition, the Board has publicly reprimanded McKesson for failing to report suspicious orders of controlled substances to the Drug Enforcement Administration. The Board also ordered McKesson to pay \$4,000 in investigative and enforcement costs.

The Board's disciplinary action stems from McKesson's alleged violations of the federal Controlled Substances Act, for which the company agreed to pay a record \$150 million civil penalty in 2017. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, from 2008 to 2013, McKesson shipped to pharmacies nationwide increasing amounts of oxycodone and hydrocodone pills, which are often misused in the current opioid epidemic.

The Board of Pharmacy approved the stipulated settlement with McKesson on July 29, 2019. The order takes effect Aug. 28, 2019.

Naloxone is a prescription medication that blocks the effects of opioids and can reverse an overdose if administered in time. Providing naloxone to police officers, firefighters and other first responders to emergency calls will increase availability of the medication in California communities and help prevent opioid overdose deaths.

Under the settlement terms, McKesson must submit to the Board a proposal for distributing the naloxone within 120 days of the order's effective date. The proposal must specify which first responder organizations or similar nonprofit agencies will receive naloxone, the manner and timing of the distribution, and the quantity distributed to each entity.

In addition, McKesson must report every six months on its progress in distributing the naloxone. All the naloxone must be distributed within four years of the order's effective date.

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