

DECEMBER 30 2023



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Great News!

For those who did not see the e-mail from MSSNY, Governor Hochul vetoed the Grieving Families Act. I would like to personally thank everyone who contacted the Governor's office and asked her to veto this bill. It's through these kinds of grassroots efforts that we can continue to practice medicine in New York in the way we know best.

Thank you for your dedication. Happy New Year!

Adam Rubinstein, MD



**Dutchess County Behavior & Community Health
Commissioner's Corner**

Happy Holidays! I present my offering of some reminders from the world of local public health:

It's also respiratory season, at least in theory. The last two years have seen some upheaval in the previously predictable seasonality of respiratory bugs, but we still expect increased influenza, COVID and RSV activity over the winter. There are some good resources that can help you stay on top of

the what's happening locally. The NY State DOH maintains [current COVID data](#) on their website; you can filter the data by Region or County, and look at trends in testing and hospitalizations. The State DOH has an [influenza page](#) with links to their [weekly reports](#). The [DOH RSV resources](#) aren't as robust but contain some useful links and information, including information about the vaccines recently approved for those 60 and older. Note that due to a national shortage, the CDC has issued [updated guidelines](#) for the use of nirsevimab, the monoclonal "immunization product" approved for babies under 19 months, recommending limiting its use to babies under 8 months, or those 8-19 months with risk of severe RSV disease.

Please consider that this season is associated with increases in problems with substance use and addiction. We want Dutchess County to be a place where recovery is possible and supported by our physicians. We want those who need help to be able to seek it without fear of stigma or closed doors. There are too many lives being lost to overdoses, and we as physicians can be part of the solution.

Prescribe and dispense naloxone liberally. Please screen patients for substance use disorders and refer them for medication assisted treatment (MAT) for opioids. [Sun River Health offers MAT](#) in multiple locations in Dutchess County, but we need more of you to treat these individuals! Learn about harm reduction, including fentanyl test strips, syringe exchange, and intranasal naloxone so you can better educate patients and families. Our [Empowerment Center](#) is open Monday through Friday and provides free access to peer recovery coaches who are trained in harm reduction and trauma informed care, and can advocate for individuals and help connect them to the help they need. All that said, our data show that many overdoses involve not just opioids, but also prescribed medications, particularly benzodiazepines.

In Dutchess County, there were almost [400 benzodiazepine prescriptions](#) for every 1000 residents—something we should all view with high concern. This winter, I would encourage all prescribers to review and revise medication regimens, and consider tweaks to your overall practice, with all this in mind.

Finally, in the spirit of the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday, I would like to thank you for continuing to serve this community. This past weekend, my daughter and I volunteered at an incredible Coat Sort event. It was the culmination of the annual Coat Drive organized by [Dutchess Outreach](#), an incredible organization that addresses food insecurity and other needs right in the heart of the City of Poughkeepsie. I was struck not only by the size of the volunteer crew, dozens of them, that showed up in force, but also by the sheer scale of the donation—an estimated 12,000 coats plus hundreds of hats, scarves, and gloves. I believe those piles of coats reflect a spirit of consideration and generosity I see everywhere in Dutchess County. And for this too, I am grateful.

My wishes to you and yours for a Happy Thanksgiving,

Livia Santiago-Rosado, MD

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