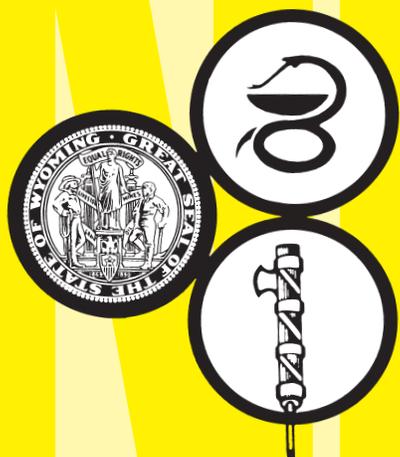


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Wyoming State Board of Pharmacy

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Prescription Drug Abuse

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Although most patients take their prescription medications responsibly and as directed by their physician, as a pharmacist, it is important to be aware of the increasing problem of prescription drug abuse. Prescription drug abuse is a serious problem nationwide; it is a cause for concern as the health and safety of the public is endangered. Abuse occurs when an individual uses a prescription drug for non-medical purposes or in a manner not prescribed by a health care practitioner. The increase in prescription drug abuse can be attributed to several factors, such as an increase in the number of prescriptions written, social acceptance of medication use, and aggressive marketing of medications by pharmaceutical companies, etc. Approximately 20% of the United States population (ages 12 and older) have used prescription drugs for non-medical reasons in their lifetime. According to the federal Drug Abuse Warning Network, prescription drugs accounted for more emergency room visits than the number of visits due to marijuana and heroin use combined. From 1999 to 2004, nearly all poison deaths in the US were associated with drug abuse, mainly prescription and illegal drugs. The number of deaths increased 62.5% during this time period, from 12,186 to 20,950. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, drug overdoses are the second leading cause of unintentional injury death in the US, exceeded only by motor vehicle fatalities; however, prescription drug overdoses are the leading cause of accidental death in individuals between the ages of 45 and 54.

Prescription drug abuse has become increasingly prevalent among teens and young adults. In the US, 1.5 million children have reported abusing prescription drugs and 2.1 million have reported intentionally abusing cough syrup. In 2008, 15.4% of 12th graders reported using a prescription drug for a non-medical purpose within the past year; these drugs included amphetamines, barbiturates, sedatives, tranquilizers, opiates, and heroin. According to the Wy-

oming Prevention Needs Assessment, 15% of 12th graders reported using prescription drugs and 12% reported using over-the-counter (OTC) drugs to get high. Every day, an alarming 2,700 teens try a prescription drug to get high for the first time. Unfortunately, half of these teens do not see a risk in abusing prescription or OTC drugs; in addition, they believe prescription and OTC medications are safer than street drugs. As a recreational activity, teens participate in "pharming," a term used to describe get-togethers where prescription drugs are exchanged and randomly ingested in order to become intoxicated. From 1999 to 2004, there was a seven-fold increase in the abuse of dextromethorphan, a cough suppressant in many OTC cough and cold products, reported to poison control centers; most of these cases were teenagers between the ages of 15 and 16. A majority of teens say they abuse prescription painkillers: 51% say it is not illegal; 33% believe there is less shame associated with using them; 21% say their parents do not care much if they get caught; many say they are easily accessible.

As a health care provider, it is important to be aware of the increasing problem with prescription drug abuse; preventing or stopping this abuse is an essential part of patient care. Pharmacists play a vital role in preventing prescription drug abuse and misuse by counseling patients on how to take their medications appropriately, about the effects the medications may have, and possible drug interactions. In addition, pharmacists can inform their patients about the dangers posed by taking medications in a way not directed or by combining them with other medications or alcohol. Pharmacists should educate their patients to safely store, secure, and dispose of unused medications so children, family, and friends are not tempted to experiment. Furthermore, pharmacists have the unique ability to help prevent prescription fraud or diversion by knowing how to identify false or altered prescription forms.

Prescription medications can be very beneficial for many health conditions; however, prescription medications

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NABP Seeking Pharmacists in All Practice Areas to Take Survey

The expertise of pharmacists in all areas of pharmacy practice is needed for an online survey NABP is conducting as part of a full pharmacy practice analysis. The survey, which is available at www.zoomerang.com/Survey/?p=WEB2297C9ZRC3F, will run from April 1 to June 30, 2009. Survey results will furnish data necessary to update and validate the current North American Pharmacist Licensure Examination® (NAPLEX®) competency statements, which are scheduled to be revised and implemented into the 2010 blueprint.

NABP conducts a pharmacy practice analysis at least every five years in accordance with standard testing industry examination development and revision guidelines. The analysis allows NABP to ensure that the NAPLEX competencies are in line with the existing pharmacy practice standards and that they accurately reflect the current knowledge, skills, and abilities of entry-level pharmacists seeking licensure. Questions may be directed to custserv@nabp.net or 847/391-4406.

Teen Abuse of Prescription Medications: Curtailing a Growing and Dangerous Trend

Teen-targeted, antidrug campaigns have shifted focus to tackle the current culprit in teen drug abuse: prescription medications. The nonprofit Partnership for a Drug-Free America (Partnership), and government agencies such as the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) are using Web sites and televised public service announcements to educate parents and teens about the dangers of prescription drug abuse as well as prevention strategies. In support of such efforts, the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy® (NABP®) is taking steps to raise awareness among pharmacy stakeholders about the urgency of the issue, the benefits of prevention counseling for parents and teens, and support of local medication disposal programs.

A Trend with Deadly Consequences

The teen prescription drug abuse trend demands an assertive approach, as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicates that unintentional drug poisoning from misuse of prescription drugs is now the second leading cause of accidental death in the United States. Further, according to the Drug Abuse Warning Network, emergency room visits for prescription medication abuse and “street drugs” are almost equal. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) studies reveal that more teens are trying prescription medications in order to “get high” than marijuana.

To complicate matters, a study done by the Partnership suggests that prescription drugs are not just replacing illicit drugs but instead appear to be an intermediate step in drug use. As one survey participant stated, “[T]aking pills made me much more open to taking x [ecstasy]. At a certain point, it just became another pill.”

Prescription Drugs of Choice for Teens

Pain relievers such as Vicodin® and OxyContin®, stimulants such as Adderall® and Ritalin®, and tranquilizers such as Xanax® and Valium® are the prescription medications most frequently abused by teenagers, the Partnership finds.

Putting the problem in perspective, SAMHSA studies from 2007 show that 2.1 million adolescents age 12 or older tried prescription medications for nonmedical uses – the same number that tried mari-

juana. Tranquilizers (1.2 million teens), cocaine (0.9 million teens), ecstasy (0.8 million teens), inhalants (0.8 million teens), and stimulants (0.6 million teens) were the next drugs most frequently chosen by teens for first time use. SAMHSA reports that, every day, 2,500 youths (age 12 to 17) abuse a prescription pain reliever for the first time. Among teens who have abused painkillers, nearly one-fifth (18%) used them at least weekly in the past year.

Teens are also abusing over-the-counter products such as cough/cold medications. According to a SAMHSA study, 3.1 million people aged 12 to 25 had tried cough or cold medications to get high in their lifetime, and almost 1 million had done so in 2005.

Why Teens Choose Prescription Medications

In surveys conducted by the Partnership, teens reported that they used prescription drugs to help them deal with problems, manage their lives, lower stress, and enhance performance, as well as to get high.

According to ONDCP’s 2008 report, *Prescription for Danger: A Report on the Troubling Trend of Prescription and Over-the-Counter Drug Abuse Among the Nation’s Teens*, teens think that using prescription medications to manage stress or get high is safer than using street drugs. Further, prescription medications are more easily available to teens than illicit drugs such as cocaine or ecstasy. Teens obtain medications from the medicine cabinet at home, through friends, or at friends’ homes.

While prescription drugs may be more readily accessible for teens, large numbers are combining these medications with alcohol and/or illicit drugs. For example, 49% of teens who abused painkillers reported using two or more other drugs, including alcohol (81%) and marijuana (58%), ONDCP reports. Further, the report notes, poisonings as a result of combining prescription and over-the-counter drugs have risen drastically.

Stemming the Growth of Prescription Drug Abuse

In response to this growing problem, organizations and government agencies recommend educating both parents and teens about the dangers of prescription drug abuse, and modifying and encouraging the use of prescription medication disposal programs.

At its 104th Annual Meeting in May 2008, NABP passed a resolution that stipulates use of its newsletter programs to keep pharmacists and other constituents informed about the urgent issue of teen prescription drug abuse, so that they in turn can help to provide parents and teens with current prevention information. Such educational efforts are vital, as the Partnership reports that most parents do not realize that teens are intentionally abusing medications to get high, and that they think their teens are not vulnerable to prescription drug abuse. Further, the Partnership finds that, like many teens, parents tend to think that teen abuse of prescription medications is safer than teen abuse of street drugs.

Organizations such as the Partnership aim to educate parents and teens directly, informing them about the abuse trend, and emphasizing the necessity of using prescription medications appropriately.

Knowledge of this information is important to pharmacists since they are in an excellent position to counsel parents on teen drug abuse when dispensing prescriptions with high abuse potential.

Phil Bauer of the Partnership stated in his presentation at the NABP 104th Annual Meeting: “We need to reach out and empower parents, give them the information they need. Parents talking to kids reduces drug use by 50%.” Similar to past drug prevention programs that



focused on illicit drugs, Bauer and the Partnership encourage parents to communicate with their kids about prescription drug abuse and its dangers. Likewise, ONDCP reports that when parents express strong disapproval of drug abuse, teens are much less likely to adopt this dangerous behavior.

Another immediate step parents can take, the Partnership advises, is safeguarding the medications kept in their homes. Safeguarding involves properly disposing of unused and expired medications, and taking an inventory of all current medications. Further, parents can keep medications stored in an area that is not readily accessible to teens or their friends.

To raise awareness among families and the public, the Partnership, along with ONDCP, launched a media campaign using their Web sites as well as televised public service announcements aired during the 2008 Super Bowl. The Partnership Web site provides a list of facts parents can stress to teens. The Web site states: "The Partnership is urging parents, both through this new campaign and through our online resources and information to learn about this serious problem, share the information with their teens, and take action to prevent teens from accessing these medications at home."

More information and resources are available on the Partnership Web site at www.drugfree.org.

Health Care Consumers: Essential Partners in Safe Medication Use



This column was prepared by the Institute for Safe Medication Practices (ISMP). ISMP is an independent nonprofit agency that analyzes medication errors, near misses, and potentially hazardous conditions as reported by pharmacists and other practitioners. ISMP then makes appropriate contacts with companies and regulators, gathers expert opinion about prevention measures, and publishes its recommendations. To read about the risk reduction strategies that you can put into practice today, subscribe to ISMP Medication Safety Alert!® Community/Ambulatory Edition by visiting www.ismp.org. ISMP is a Federally Certified Patient Safety Organization, providing legal protection and confidentiality for submitted patient safety data and error reports. ISMP is also a Food and Drug Administration (FDA) MedWatch partner. Call 1-800-FAIL-SAF(E) to report medication errors to the ISMP Medication Errors Reporting Program (MERP) or report online at www.ismp.org. ISMP address: 200 Lakeside Dr, Suite 200, Horsham, PA 19044. Phone: 215/947-7797. E-mail: ismpinfo@ismp.org.

A study in the September 10, 2007 *Archives of Internal Medicine* found that a significant percentage of American consumers may not be using their medications safely.

Between 1998 and 2005 alone, there was a 360% increase in deaths attributed to consumers using medications incorrectly at home (not involving alcohol or street drugs).

Proactive communication between pharmacists and patients is a major way to reduce the risk of medication errors.

However, there are barriers to patients communicating with pharmacists about the drugs they are taking, including limited time for speaking with patients and lack of appropriate written materials.

Pharmacists should explore ways to make suitable written materials on medications readily available. Be sure to seek feedback from patients (eg, through focus groups and targeted satisfaction survey questions) to ensure that written materials effectively communicate the most important information.

Management support for widespread education is essential to ensure effective use of electronic resources as well as dedicated time to talk with patients.

Many pharmacists assume that their patients can read, understand, and act on instructions on medication labels and in medication information pamphlets. But although 90 million Americans read below the 5th grade level, 98% of the medication information sheets accompanying dispensed prescriptions are written at a 9th to 12th grade level or higher.

Poor health literacy can lead to consumers misusing and making mistakes with their medications. Adults with low health literacy:

- ◆ Are less likely to adhere to prescribed treatment and self-care regimens
- ◆ Make more medication or treatment errors

Children are particularly vulnerable to medication misuse. One study has demonstrated that parents give their children an incorrect dose of over-the-counter fever medicine 47% of the time. Other recent studies have shown that educating parents on how to measure and administer the correct dose of medication for their children can prevent serious errors.

When dispensing pediatric medication, involve the child's parents and demonstrate correct measurement and administration techniques when possible. Emphasize the importance of using an appropriate measuring device (the original product dropper or dosing cup, or proper type of syringe), not a household spoon.

The Internet has opened a whole new avenue for consumers to obtain information on how to use their medications. Americans spend a large portion of time online searching for advice about health and safety. According to the 2007 *Preventing Medication Errors*, the percentage of adults who have sought health information online grew from 27% (54 million) in 1998 to 53% (117 million) in 2005.

But the report found that while there is an abundance of Internet-based health information, the quality of that information is variable.

ISMP maintains links to leading patient safety entities and information on its Web site, www.ismp.org, and recently launched a consumer-focused Web site that provides even more specific medication safety information. Visit the new site at www.ConsumerMedSafety.org. ISMP allows and encourages all state board Web sites to link to this new consumer patient safety Web site.

FDA Expands Warning to Consumers about Tainted Weight Loss Pills

On January 8, 2009, FDA expanded its nationwide alert to consumers about tainted weight loss pills that contain undeclared, active pharmaceutical ingredients. On December 22, 2008, FDA warned consumers not to purchase or consume 28 different products marketed for weight loss. Since that time, FDA analysis has identified 41 more tainted weight loss products that may put consumers' health at risk. The complete list of drugs is available on the FDA Web site.

can produce serious adverse effects and can lead to addiction if they are not taken as prescribed. Pharmacists, health care providers, and patients all play a role in preventing prescription medication abuse and addiction.

Licenses Must be Posted

The Wyoming State Board of Pharmacy compliance officers report that one of the most common problems encountered when conducting inspections is the lack of licenses posted in the pharmacy.

Wyoming Pharmacy Act Rules and Regulations, Chapter 2, Section 8(g) states: "All licenses and certificates issued by the Board shall be displayed in a prominent place within the facility and always in view to the public." This includes the pharmacy permit and Drug Enforcement Administration registration, as well as the licenses and certifications (such as immunization) of the pharmacists, interns, and pharmacy technicians. Frequently, only the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board certificate is posted for a pharmacy technician, but the Wyoming license must also be visible. Pharmacy technicians must also wear a name badge.

Wyoming Pharmacy Act Rules and Regulations Chapter 10, Section 8(f) states: "Wear a name badge with the appropriate designation 'Pharmacy Technician' or a 'Pharmacy Technician-In-Training' at all times when in or near the pharmacy area."

2009 Wyoming Legislative Session

Kerri L. Powell, PharmD Candidate

During the 2009 legislative session, three bills were presented and passed to help curb prescription drug abuse: House Bill 164, House Bill 294, and Senate File 106. House Bill 164, Prescription Drug Fraud-Felony, was passed to amend the statutes to specify a person obtaining possession of a prescription for a controlled substance through the alteration or forgery of a prescription is guilty of a felony; in addition, this bill provides first-time offenders under that section to be placed on probation and have further proceedings dismissed. House Bill 294,

Prescription Drug Database, requires weekly reporting by pharmacies to the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP), the controlled substance prescription tracking program, and requires the Wyoming State Board of Pharmacy to create a pilot project for real-time access to data from the PDMP. Senate File 106, Medication Disposal Program, expands the drug donation program to accept expired or unused drugs for disposal and authorizes the Department of Health to maintain collection facilities and conduct drug "take back events" around Wyoming.

Board Membership

Effective March 1, 2009, Governor Dave Freudenthal reappointed Randolph A. "Randy" Harrop, RPh, to the Board for a six-year term. Randy was originally appointed to the Board in 2003. The April 2009 meeting of the Board was Randy's last meeting as president. The Board elected Alison K. "Kay" McManus, RPh, as president, Terry L. Carr, RPh, as vice president, and Jennifer S. Nevins, RPh, as secretary/treasurer. Each will serve a two-year term in office.

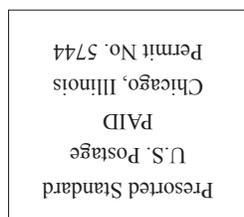
June 2009 Board Meeting

The next meeting of the Board will be June 24-25, 2009, at the Ramada Plaza Riverside, in Casper, WY. The meeting has been scheduled to coincide with the 92nd Annual Convention of the Wyoming Pharmacy Association. Please feel free to attend any or all of the Board meetings. The agenda will be posted on the Board Web site approximately two weeks prior to the meeting.

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