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Michigan Pharmacists Association's 2017 Disposal Event Brings in Nearly One Ton of Medication

Press conference highlights the importance of collaboration to combat the opioid epidemic and the value pharmacists bring in protecting the health and wellness of Michigan residents

Lansing, Mich. - At the eighth annual Medication Disposal Event, held Sept. 12, 2017, at the Michigan State Capitol, nearly 1,600 pounds of medications were dropped off by Lansing area residents for safe disposal. Of those 1,600 pounds, over 20 pounds were controlled substances. Over the last eight years since Michigan Pharmacists Association (MPA) began holding the disposal event, nearly four tons of pharmaceuticals have been collected and properly disposed of, with a total value of more than \$8.75 million. Providing this safe means for disposing of medications has removed unnecessary and harmful drugs from households where they have the potential to be diverted or misused.

According to the Michigan Department of Health & Human Services, between 1999 and 2016, the total amount of overdoses involving an opioid increased more than 17 times, from 99 to 1,689.¹ In 2016, more people died of drug overdoses in Michigan than car accidents, totaling 2,335 overdose deaths.¹ Pharmacists are a logical and local solution to helping curb the opioid epidemic. Pharmacists can provide education and counseling to patients prescribed opioids, and when working collaboratively with other providers, pharmacists can positively affect the rising rates of drug abuse and diversion.

Larry Wagenknecht, MPA chief executive officer, along with two other MPA members, as well as other healthcare professionals throughout the state, sit on the Governor's Michigan Prescription Drug and Opioid Abuse Commission. This collaboration has created proposed changes that will curb the increase in opioid abuse. The Commission continues to seek solutions to the opioid problem that challenges every community in the State in an effort to address the alarming rates of opioid abuse and misuse.

The Medication Disposal Event is held in conjunction with Pharmacy Day at the Capitol, an event designed to educate government officials and the public on the vital role pharmacists play in healthcare. Lawmakers received health screenings as well as influenza and pneumonia immunizations administered by pharmacists. The general public, State Representatives and Senators, and government employees who brought their unused, unwanted or expired medications to be disposed learned about proper medication disposal methods and the vital role that pharmacists play in keeping patients and communities safe.

The press conference addressed the many collaborative efforts the state of Michigan and Michigan Pharmacists Association have taken to curb the opioid epidemic, including upgrades to the Michigan Automated Prescription System (MAPS) and the overwhelming success of the State Standing Order for naloxone, the opioid reversal agent now available to patients without a prescription. Speakers this year included Shelly Edgerton, director of the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs; Eden V. Wells, M.D., chief medical executive for the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services; Jim Lile, Pharm.D., pharmacist and president of Michigan Pharmacists Association; Jack Schinderle, director of waste management and radiological protection division with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and Larry Wagenknecht, pharmacist and chief executive officer of the Michigan Pharmacists Association. MPA would also like to thank the City of Wyoming for their continued support and collaboration in the Medication Disposal Event and working to keep unused, unwanted or expired medications off our streets and out of our environment.

Michigan Pharmacists Association, representing the nearly 9,000 pharmacists and 15,000 pharmacy technicians in Michigan, strives to serve members by providing support, advocacy and resources that ultimately improve patient care, safety, health and the practice of pharmacy. For more information, visit www.MichiganPharmacists.org.

References:

1. Michigan Department of Health & Human Services. Prescription Drug and Opioids in Michigan. Michigan.gov. Accessed Sept. 12, 2017.

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