



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sept. 26, 2016

Contact: Kristina Bird, MPA communications manager
(517) 377-0232

**Michigan Pharmacists Association Disposal Event Brings in
2 Tons of Medications Over the Last Seven Years**

Press conference highlights the importance of curbing substance abuse in Michigan and the role of pharmacists

Lansing, Mich. - At the seventh annual Medication Disposal Event, held Sept. 20, 2016, at the Michigan State Capitol, nearly 600 pounds of medications were dropped off by Lansing area residents for safe disposal. Of those 600 pounds, over 20 pounds were controlled substances. Over the last seven years since Michigan Pharmacists Association (MPA) began holding the disposal event, nearly two tons of pharmaceuticals have been collected and properly disposed of, with a total value of more than \$4 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.

According to the Michigan Department of Health & Human Services, Michigan's drug overdose threats rose by 14 percent in 2014, resulting in the number one cause of injury related death for that year.¹ Of those deaths, they primarily affected adults aged 25-34 with heroin-related deaths three times more likely among men.² Overall, the mortality rate as it relates to drug overdoses has nearly tripled in Michigan within the last 20 years. One of the main ways that we can address this epidemic is through the involvement of pharmacists. By working collaboratively with other healthcare practitioners, pharmacy professionals can help ensure that patients have access to necessary pain medication while also making drug diversion more difficult.

Larry Wagenknecht, MPA chief executive officer, along with two other MPA members, as well as other healthcare professionals throughout the state, now sit on the Governor's Michigan Prescription Drug and Opioid Abuse Commission. This collaboration will ideally create policies and action plans that will curb the increase in opioid abuse and overall address the many concerns raised in the Recommendations from the Drug and Opioid Abuse Task Force last year. This collaboration is a simple step to address the growing problem.

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 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 of learned about proper medication disposal methods and the vital role that pharmacists play in keeping patients and communities safe.

The press conference addressed the growing opioid abuse problem throughout the state, and spoke on how the allied health professions all play a role in helping to curb the epidemic while educating the public about the importance of proper drug adherence. Speakers this year included Rick Snyder, Governor of the State of Michigan, Larry Wagenknecht, pharmacist and MPA chief executive officer, Amy Smendik, pharmacist and MPA president, Brian Peters, chief executive officer, Michigan Health & Hospital Association (MHA), Dr. Roy Soto, anesthesiologist at Beaumont Hospital and MHA Keystone and Jack Schinderle, chief of the Office of Environmental Assistance, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality.

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 opioid abuse deaths continue to rise in 2014. *Michigan.gov*. Published March 7, 2016. Accessed Sept. 24, 2016.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Injury Prevention & Control: Opioid Overdose – State Data. *CDC.gov*. Published May 2, 2016. Accessed Sept. 24, 2016.

###