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Michigan Pharmacists Association Disposal Event Brings in 1.6 Tons of Medications Over the Last Six Years

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

Lansing, Mich. - At the sixth annual Medication Disposal Event, held Sept. 22 at the Michigan State Capitol, nearly 600 pounds of medications were dropped off by Lansing area residents for safe disposal. Over the last six years since Michigan Pharmacists Association (MPA) began holding the disposal event, 1.6 tons of pharmaceuticals have been collected and properly disposed of, with a total value of more than \$4 million. By providing a means for safely disposing of these medications, we remove them from households where they have the potential to be diverted.

According to a recent report by the Trust for America's Health, Michigan has the 18th highest drug overdose mortality rate in the United States, with 13.9 per 100,000 people suffering drug overdose fatalities. The report, *Prescription Drug Abuse: Strategies to Stop the Epidemic*, also finds that Michigan received six out of 10 possible indicators of promising strategies to help curb prescription drug abuse. One of the ways that we can address this is by involving pharmacists in the process. By working collaboratively with other health care practitioners, pharmacy professionals can help ensure that patients have access to necessary pain medication while also making drug diversion more difficult.

"Pharmacists continue to be committed to helping address the issue of substance abuse in Michigan," said Larry Wagenknecht, MPA chief executive officer. "I, along with pharmacist Laurie Wesolowicz, sit on the new Michigan Prescription Drug and Opioid Abuse Task Force organized by Gov. Rick Snyder. We look forward to continuing to work collaboratively with health care providers, government officials and community members to find solutions to these problems. As the most accessible health care providers and the medication experts, pharmacists are on the front lines combating prescription drug abuse."

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 health care. 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.

To kick off Pharmacy Day at the Capitol and to highlight the expanding and innovative roles of pharmacists, the importance of their involvement in proper medication disposal and how we can combat the substance abuse epidemic in Michigan, a press conference was held. Speakers included Larry Wagenknecht, pharmacist, and chief executive officer, MPA; Brian Calley, lieutenant governor, State of Michigan; Jennifer Hagerman, president, MPA, and associate vice president, education and quality, Diplomat; Chris Stolicker, captain, Michigan State Police; and Jim Sygo, chief deputy director, 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.

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