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Michigan Pharmacists Association Encourages Health Care Professionals to Educate Patients on the Importance of Poison Prevention

Lansing, Mich.—According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), every 13 seconds one of the 55 poison control centers across the United States (U.S.) answers a call about a potential poisoning. In addition, more than 90 percent of these exposures occur in the home. Michigan Pharmacists Association (MPA) encourages pharmacy professionals and other health care providers to use available resources to educate their patients on the dangers of poisonings and the importance of exercising safety when handling poisonous substances.

National Poison Prevention Week will be observed March 15-21 this year, providing a great opportunity for pharmacists and other health care providers to spread informative resources and protect their patients and their loved ones. There are many simple ways to educate the public and help save lives, including the simple act of programming the poison help line (1-800-222-1222) into your phone or keeping the number near your phone and encouraging friends and family to do the same.

MPA also offers resources to its pharmacy professional members online at www.MichiganPharmacists.org. This includes resources specifically designed to help local pharmacist organizations across the state with organizing events such as a presentation to an area elementary school. Each year, Capital Area Pharmacists Association (CAPA) organizes an event at the Lansing City Market to provide education on poison prevention to adults and children, including poison prevention at home and how to contact a poison control center. Education for children includes a display highlighting medication vs. candy, liquids and whether items are safe or unsafe to drink. Coloring books are also made available to children.

“Statistics show that poisonings happen more often than house fires or car accidents, especially in young children, said Heather Schalk, a member of CAPA and MPA’s Local Association Development Committee as well as a clinical pharmacist with Sparrow Health System in Lansing. “Often, these incidents could have been prevented. As a mother and health professional, I feel it is my responsibility to not only poison proof my own home, but also to spread awareness in the community about the dangers of poisonings, how these can be prevented and ultimately what to do if a poisoning were to happen. Poisonings can occur from many products, including unintentional poisonings due to medications or household products (pesticides, cleaning supplies and beauty products). As a parent, grandparent, teacher, etc. we do everything we can to protect our kids, grandkids and students; be sure this includes properly securing and storing medicines and other potential poisons. In addition, I always stress to families, especially those with young children, to keep the poison help line phone number handy just in case. So do your part and take some time this week to review your home and garage and make sure it is safe.”

Pharmacist volunteers from CAPA will be stationed at the Lansing City Market, 325 City Market Drive, on Saturday, March 14 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

In addition to resources offered by MPA, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provides materials online at www.PoisonHelp.hrsa.gov/resources such as programs and web-based modules about medication safety and preventing accidental poisonings, brochures, infographics and prevention tip sheets.

Pharmacists are the medication experts and most accessible health care providers, available in nearly every community (rural, urban and suburban), including hospitals and health-systems, long-term care facilities and other medical institutions. Patients are encouraged to utilize the expertise of their pharmacist and ask any questions they may have about medications, health screenings, immunizations and other topics vital to their health care.

Together, we can reduce poisonings that can cause death and injuries in the U.S.

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.