



Advocating on behalf of Michigan's pharmacy professionals for quality patient care

KEY STATEMENT

Medicines play an important role in treating certain conditions and diseases, but they must be taken with care. Pharmacists are critical to ensuring that patients are safely and effectively taking their medications, avoiding harmful interactions and educating the public on the importance of adhering to medication therapies. Unused portions of these medicines, including those that are expired or unwanted, must also be disposed of properly to avoid harm, to both patients and the environment.

BACKGROUND

Pharmacists are the medication experts and patient advocates on the health care team. Their extensive knowledge of medications and treatments are critical to patients in making sure medications are used safely, and that patients are informed and ready to comply with their medication regimen. **Pharmacists assure medication distribution systems are safe, constantly working to prevent medication errors and costly medication problems**, as well as increase patients' quality of life. By participating in and organizing medication disposal events and providing drop-off services, pharmacists and pharmacy organizations also help protect the environment and curb potential medication abuse.

HOW DO PHARMACISTS IMPACT MEDICATION SAFETY?

- **In 2011, several studies showed that medication nonadherence could cost the United States more than \$250 billion per year.** Missing doses of prescribed medications could lead to costly hospital visits, and not taking medications properly often yields the same results. Researchers also found that more than half of people who believe they take their medications properly are not. As the medication experts, pharmacists are available to answer patient questions regarding their medications. Pharmacists also offer medication therapy management (MTM) services, where **patients can sit down face-to-face with their pharmacist and get help with managing their medications.**
- During MTM sessions or a patient's visit to their pharmacy, pharmacists can explain the importance of taking medications when directed, provide reminders, look for potentially harmful interactions, and create a chart or wallet card listing all medications so the person has it in an emergency. **Pharmacists are always looking for new and innovative ways to encourage the safe use of medications.**
- **More than seven million Americans currently abuse prescription medications, and each day, nearly 2,500 teens use these medications to get high for the first time,** according to the Partnership for a Drug Free America. Studies show that a majority of abused prescriptions are obtained from family and friends, including out of home medicine cabinets. Medication disposal events and pharmacy drop-off locations help increase awareness of safe disposal practices, as well as address a vital public safety and health concern.

BOTTOM LINE

The general public often doesn't adhere to medication therapies because they forget to refill prescriptions, forget to take them, feel they don't need them or find them too expensive. Pharmacists are in a unique position to explain the importance of taking medications as prescribed and look for possible adverse effects to avoid costly hospital visits. They play a vital role in medication safety by offering safe disposal options as well, preventing family and friends from having access to medications they could potentially abuse.





Additional Information

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