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Key Inforbits

- Objectives of American Pharmacists Month
- History of American Pharmacists Month
- Ways to Celebrate APhM
- Medicine take-back programs
- Top 10 Questions you should know
- Expanding the Role of the Pharmacist

October is . . .

American Pharmacists Month!



Objectives for American Pharmacists Month:

- To recognize the vital contributions made by pharmacists to healthcare in the US.
- To enhance the image of pharmacists as medication experts and an integral part of the healthcare team, not just dispensers of medication.
- To educate the public, policy makers, pharmacists, and other healthcare professionals about the key role played by pharmacists in reducing overall healthcare costs by improved medication use and advanced patient care.
- To stress the importance of Knowing Your Medicine and Knowing Your Pharmacist to ensure drug therapy is as safe and effective as possible.

History of American Pharmacists Month:

Robert J. Ruth, a pharmacist in Asheville, NC, first proposed an annual event to celebrate the pharmaceutical profession in 1924. The first annual National Pharmacy Week was held on October 11-17, 1925. During this week, radio stations had special broadcasts that emphasized the pharmacy profession. In 2004, National Pharmacy Week was expanded into American Pharmacists Month (APhM) because many pharmacists felt that one week was not enough time to fully promote the profession. Today, APhM is a time to celebrate pharmacists' value to the healthcare system and their role as medication experts.

The theme for this year's APhM is . . .

"Know your MEDICINE, know your PHARMACIST"

1. American Pharmacists Association: Improving medication use. Advancing patient care [Internet]. Washington, DC: American Pharmacists Association; c2011. American Pharmacists Month; [cited 2011 Sept 24]; [about 2 screens]. Available from: http://www.pharmacist.com/Content/NavigationMenu3/Newsroom/AmericanPharmacistsMonth/American_Pharmacists.htm



Ways to Promote American Pharmacist Month:

- **TALK** to seniors at a long-term care facility about their prescriptions, OTC medications, and herbal products, and the importance of communicating with their pharmacists.
- **CREATE** displays and signs throughout stores and in hospital waiting areas to encourage patients to “Know your MEDICINE, Know your PHARMACIST.”
- **PROMOTE** medicine take-back programs throughout the month by encouraging patients to bring in unused prescription and OTC drugs to be safely discarded.
- **TEACH** high school students about the profession and potential career opportunities.
- **ORGANIZE** a brown-bag session to go over all patients’ prescription and OTC medications to identify duplicate therapies and to promote patient/pharmacist communication.
- **OFFER** vaccinations and educate patients on importance of staying up-to-date with their immunizations.
- **PROVIDE** OTC tours by helping patients select appropriate products for their conditions and encouraging consulting with their pharmacist if they have any questions.
- **CELEBRATE** by hosting a luncheon or event to promote the cause. Take advantage of local media to publicize the event.

1. American Pharmacists Month Planning Guide [Internet]. Washington: American Pharmacist Association; 2011 Sept [cited 2011 Sept 23] Available from http://www.pharmacist.com/Content/NavigationMenu3/Newsroom/AmericanPharmacistsMonth/PlanningYourCelebration/American_Pharmacist.htm
2. Professional advocacy [Internet]. Madison: Pharmacy Society of Wisconsin; 2011 June [cited 2011 Sept 21]. Available from: <http://www.pswi.org/professional/celebrations.html>

Disposal of Unused Medications:

Medicine take-back programs are great ways to collect and remove expired and unused medicines from patients in order to decrease the chance of others accidentally taking the medication. In order to set up this program at your pharmacy, you should contact your city or county government’s household trash and recycling services to get further guidance.

If no take-back program is available in your region, pharmacists should educate patients on how to safely dispose of medications in their household. A few simple steps can help ensure safe disposal of unused medicines:

1. Mix unused medicines with unpalatable substances, such as kitty litter or used coffee grounds. Do not crush tablets or capsules before mixing.
2. Put the mixed substance in a sealed container or plastic bag.
3. Throw the bag away in your household trash.



Certain medications that can be particularly harmful or toxic if taken inappropriately are recommended to be flushed if no take-back program is available. Specific disposal instructions for these medications are typically found within the manufacturer package insert. A complete list of medicines to be disposed of by flushing can be found at <http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/BuyingUsingMedicineSafely/EnsuringSafeUseofMedicine/SafeDisposalofMedicines/ucm186187.htm>

1. Disposal of Unused Medicines: What You Should Know [Internet]. Silver Spring: U.S. Food and Drug Administration; 2011 May [cited 2011 Sept 23]. Available from <http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/BuyingUsingMedicineSafely/EnsuringSafeUseofMedicine/SafeDisposalofMedicines/ucm186187.htm>

Improving Patient Education in Healthcare:

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, recently launched a campaign to improve communication between patients and healthcare providers in order for patients to gain a more comprehensive understanding of their personal healthcare. This campaign focuses on encouraging patients to ask their physicians questions and voice their concerns regarding their treatment and drug therapy. The AHRQ provides a list of the “Top 10 Questions You Should Know,” and encourages patients to expand their knowledge even further to gain a more complete understanding of their healthcare.

While this campaign is directed at physicians, it can easily be extrapolated to pharmacists as well. Encourage patients to ask questions about their medications and discuss their treatment plan with them. Improving communication between healthcare providers and patients can lead to better results, quality of care, safety, and patient satisfaction.

1. AHRQ: Advancing Excellence in Healthcare [Internet]. Rockville, MD: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. Questions are the Answer: Better Questions, Better Care. [cited 2011 Sept 25]; [about 3 screens]. Available from: <http://www.ahrq.gov/questions/>

The Top 10 Questions You Should Know:

1. What is the test for?
2. How many times have you done this procedure?
3. When will I get the results?
4. Why do I need this treatment?
5. Are there any alternatives?
6. What are the possible complications?
7. Which hospital is best for my needs?
8. How do you spell the name of that drug?
9. Are there any side effects?
10. Will this medicine interact with medicines that I’m already taking?

The Future of Pharmacy:

Recently, an effort has been created to expand the role of a pharmacist in today’s healthcare system. This expansion is likely fueled by the emergence of the doctorate of pharmacy program and the demand of the population for more efficient and extensive healthcare.

Pharmacists are consistently the most accessible healthcare providers in our system, as most people in the United States live within five miles of a pharmacy. With pharmacists’ extensive knowledge of pharmacotherapy and disease treatment, a transition into assisting with primary care seems logical. Some programs being implemented to expand pharmacists’ roles include:



- **Immunizations:** Pharmacist-given immunizations provide convenient, easily accessible, flat-rate immunizations to the community.
- **Acute Care Clinics:** Several large pharmacy chains have placed clinics within their stores. These clinics are usually run by a physician's assistant or nurse practitioner, but they have the added convenience of a pharmacist's expertise within the same building.
- **Diabetes Care and Anticoagulation Clinics:** These pharmacist-run clinics are common in VA settings and physicians' offices. In this setting, pharmacists are able to closely and intensively manage patients that have been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes or patients who require their INR and PT times monitored for warfarin dose modification.
- **Health Screenings:** Many recent American studies have shown that the integration of pharmacists into outpatient care can be a tremendous asset to the management and prevention of many disease states including diabetes, hyperlipidemia, and cardiovascular disease. The role of the pharmacist in these incidences is to provide a widely accessible evaluation of a patient's disease state risk factors. The pharmacist then can refer specific cases to a physician. Studies have shown this type of collaborative medicine to be an efficient and accepted alternative to physician screenings. An Australian study focusing on the utility of pharmacy diabetes screenings found that 56% of participants preferred health screenings by pharmacists versus general practitioners.

1. Santschi V, Chiolero A, Burnand B, Colosimo AL, Paradis G. Impact of pharmacist care in the management of cardiovascular disease risk factors: a systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized trials. *Arch Intern Med.* 2011 Sept 12;171(16):1441-53.
2. Pape GA, Hunt JS, Butler KL, Siemieniczuk J, LeBlanc BH, Gillanders W, et al. Team-based care approach to cholesterol management in diabetes mellitus: 2-year cluster randomized trial. *Arch Intern Med.* 2011 Sept 12;171(16):1480-6.
3. Jackson S, Peterson G. Health screening in community pharmacy: an update. *Pharmacist.* 2006 Nov;25(11):846-51.
4. Terrie Y. Vaccinations: The expanding role of pharmacists. *Pharmacy Times* [Internet]. 2010 Jan [cited 2011 Sept 23]. Available from: <http://www.pharmacist.com/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home2&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&CONTENTID=6256>
5. Madhavan S. Pharmacists and Immunizations. *Medscape Today News* [Internet] 2001 Jun [cited 2011 Sept 23];41(1). Available from: http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/406709_2



The last “dose” ...

“What is the recipe for successful achievement? To my mind there are just four essential ingredients: Choose a career you love, give it the best there is in you, seize your opportunities, and be a member of the team.”

-Benjamin F. Fairless [American Industrialist, 1890 – 1962]

An electronic bulletin of drug and health-related news highlights, a service of ...

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