

PROPOSAL 2007-2

DISSEMINATE INFORMATION ON RECYCLING OF MEDICATIONS

Subject

Recycling and Destruction of Medications

Proposed by

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Contact Person

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Type of Proposal

Information

Rationale

Each day medications are destroyed in countless medical facilities across the United States. I work in a Long Term Care Facility with fewer than 50 beds; and every month I watch our pharmacist destroy large amounts of medication. When I inquired of the pharmacist whether these medications could be saved and sent to poverty stricken, medically disadvantaged countries, she indicated that drug companies already donate medications to those countries for a tax write-off and the law doesn't allow it.

Upon searching the Internet, I found many articles written by various types of people from MD's to Journalists. One gentleman is working with others to design a national, and maybe international, enterprise that will support the development and commercialization of the necessary technologies, systems and management models to enable safe return and reuse of prescription drugs; and to facilitate a credit process for returned medications.

The National Association of Counties awarded Tulsa County, Oklahoma the "Act of Caring Award" on its Recycled Medication Program. The Director of Nursing in a nursing home collects the medications and a retired physician in the county who works with the program takes the medications to the county pharmacy. They are then tested, repackaged, and distributed free of charge to members of the community who are unable to afford them.

Another article tells about an Aid for AIDS group that operates in Manhattan, New York. They collect anti-retrovirals and antibiotics to send to AIDS patients in Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America. FDA rules it is illegal to redistribute drugs in the U.S. It is, however, completely legal to redirect medications from the U.S. to other countries as a form of humanitarian aid.

Currently medications are destroyed when discontinued or out of date; usually flushed down the toilet. When they enter the sewer system, they contaminate wastewater.

Most wastewater treatment plants do not have a way to filter out medications. Antibiotics, hormones, pain killers, antidepressants, etc. are finding their way into nature's waterways. Hospitals do already reuse medications.

The Food and Drug Administration allows states to set their own policy for drugs controlled by nursing homes, long term care centers and other pharmacies. Nebraska, as well as some other states, has started programs to recycle medications from long term care facilities and consumers if they are in tamper-resistant packaging (blister pack), skirting FDA rules. Louisiana has 12 pharmacies involved in recycling medication from nursing homes and assisted living facilities because they have carefully controlled storage and distribution with blister packs.

Recommendations

- Educate ourselves and others through articles in the Nebraska Nurse and newspapers throughout the state about recycling medication.
- Educate ourselves and others about not disposing of medications in the sewer system.
- Support legislation to recycle medications to those in need should such be written.
- Work with other health professional boards and associations.

Past House Actions

None

Relation to Mission and Vision Statements

Relates to the NNA Mission and Vision Statements to improve availability of health care services for all people and to advocate for Nebraska consumers on issues relating to health

References

1. "Drug Dilemma", Nov 24, 2004, *Traverse City Record-Eagle*, Traverse City, MI, written by Marta Hepler.
2. Nov. 3, 2006 Memo to Nursing Homes in WI by Otis Woods, Director, Office of Quality Assurance, Dept of Health & Family Services, Wisconsin.
3. "Recycling Expensive Medication: Why Not?" by Jay M. Pomerantz, MD from pubmedcentral.nih.gov, 4-26-2004.
4. "Recycling and Disposal of Dispensed Drugs" by NAPRA (National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities), Canada, 3-21-2002.
5. "Old Pills Finding New Medicine Cabinets", May 18, 2005, *New York Times* by Stephanie Strom.
6. "Recovery and Reuse of Unused Prescription Drugs: Combining New Technologies, Social Policy, and Actual Implementation", August 2005 MIT *Alumni Association News and Events Newsletter* by Moshe Alamaro, ME '99.
7. "Medication recycling: New patients for old pills", Sept 26, 2005 *Drug Topics Newsletter*.

8. NACo Congratulates the Act of Caring Award Winners by Linda J. Johnson, Director of Social Services, Tulsa County, Oklahoma, 2005 article in *National Association of Counties Newsletter*
9. "Drugs given away by AIDS patients in U.S. prolong lives worldwide", *Associated Press* by Will Wiessert.

Proposed Implementation Activities

E-mailing and letter writing campaign to raise awareness of this issue

Range of Direct Costs

Stamps, paper, pen

Funding Available From Alternative Sources

None solicited