

Louisiana Pharmacists Association

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Louisiana Pharmacists Association Educates Patients about Substance Abuse

Every September, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) hosts National Recovery Month in order to “increase awareness and understanding of mental and substance abuse issues and celebrate the people who recover.” Substance abuse is the non-medical use or overuse of psychoactive and other prescription and non-prescription drugs, as defined by the American Society of Health Systems Pharmacists (ASHP). Psychoactive substances are abused primarily to depress, stimulate, or distort brain activity. Examples of psychoactive substances include alcohol and tobacco as well as “street” drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, LSD, and heroin.

Substance abuse is a very significant problem, not just in Louisiana, but all across the United States. In 2013, more than 44,000 people in the United States died as a result of a drug overdose, making it the leading cause of death from injury in the country. According to the data from The National Survey on Drug Use and Health for the years 2012-2013, the percentage of young adults ages 18-25 in the state of Louisiana who admitted to using a pain reliever for a non-medical use was close to 10%, while the percentage for patients ages 12-17 was close to 5%. The drug classes that are most likely to be abused include opioid analgesics, psychiatric medications, and over-the-counter (OTC) medications. The most commonly abused opioid analgesics include the active ingredients codeine, hydrocodone, and oxycodone. Commonly abused psychiatric drugs include sedatives such as diazepam (Valium), alprazolam (Xanax), and clonazepam (Klonopin); as well as hypnotics such as zolpidem (Ambien).

As drug information experts, pharmacists are professionally equipped to combat substance abuse in several different ways and in a variety of settings. ASHP advocates that all pharmacists assume a role in substance

abuse prevention, education, and assistance. Pharmacists primarily promote substance abuse prevention through collaboration with other professionals. They collaborate with health care organizations to develop prevention and assistance programs as well as recovery networks. Pharmacists also collaborate with churches, colleges, and organizations to provide public prevention workshops. Additionally, pharmacists collaborate with authorities to control substance abuse through prescription monitoring programs and activities such as prescription disposal programs. Pharmacists also provide education regarding the risk of addiction and potential drugs of abuse to other health care providers and patients. They aid drug abuse counselors in the recovery process, encourage increased substance abuse education in pharmacy curricula, and provide referrals for support groups. Lastly, pharmacists assist by identifying individuals in need, supporting and encouraging the recovery process, developing detoxification protocols, and by refusing to allow health care professionals to practice impaired.

It's important to keep in mind that substance abuse is not limited to prescription drugs alone, but also includes OTC medications, alcohol, and tobacco. While medical professionals are doing everything in their power to combat future deaths related to substance abuse, patients may be wondering what they can do to help or where they can go for information. The website for SAMHSA (www.samhsa.gov) has many resources to find help, assist patients in learning about prevention of substance abuse and mental health disorders, and much more. On the specific topic of prescription drug abuse, SAMHSA's public health approach includes early intervention, prevention, treatment, and recovery support systems. In addition, education regarding the dangers associated with psychoactive substance abuse is key in not only better controlling this issue, but also in preventing future deaths within our state and in our country.

Resources:

ASHP Statement on the pharmacist's role in substance abuse prevention, education, and assistance. *Am J Health Syst Pharm.* 2014;71(3):243-6.

Mccarthy M. Drug overdose has become leading cause of death from injury in US. *BMJ.* 2015;350:h3328.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. 2012-2013 National Survey on Drug Use and Health National Maps of Prevalence Estimates, by State. Available at: <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUHStateEst2012-2013-p1/Maps/NSDUHsaeMaps2013.pdf>.

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The Louisiana Pharmacists Association, established in 1882, strives to promote the interests of all pharmacists of the State of Louisiana. For more information about the LPA and its benefits, contact Julie Fuselier or Phyllis Perron, LPA Co-Executive Directors at 225/346-6883 or visit our website at www.louisianapharmacists.com.

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