

**April 4, 2016**

Known for its discernment, *The New Yorker* should have exercised more of it before publishing “Kitty Litter Can Save a Life,” an ad promoting trash disposal of unwanted medications after mixing with kitty litter (March 21, 2016). We encourage the advertisers to move beyond this unsafe and ineffective method and, instead, advocate for take-back programs funded by drug companies.

Nationwide drug take-back programs at pharmacies, police stations, and other convenient locations will save more lives and better protect the environment than trash disposal. Studies show that, when thrown in the trash, pharmaceuticals end up in waterways and drinking water, leading to behavioral and developmental changes in fish. Trash disposal also does not render leftover medications irretrievable, offering access to addicts, children, and pets. Federal agencies recognize these dangers and actively promote environmentally-sound disposal through take-back programs. For instance, in 2014, the Drug Enforcement Administration made it legal for pharmacies to install convenient, year-round collection boxes; unfortunately, pharmacies are still limited by a lack of funding. To address this issue, many other countries mandate that drug manufacturers fund and manage collection and disposal programs. Seven counties in California and one in Washington passed such laws and, recently, Massachusetts became the first state to pass a producer-financed take-back provision as part of its comprehensive law to address the opioid epidemic.

Drug take-back programs are the [best way to remove unwanted medications](#) from household medicine cabinets – preventing drug abuse, accidental overdoses, and protecting our environment.

Signed,

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