Pharmacy students plan outreach program to educate public of drug abuse problem

Prescription drug abuse among teenagers and young adults is on the rise in Idaho, ranking third behind methamphetamine and cocaine abuse, according to the Idaho Office of Drug Policy. A recent grant from the Idaho Pharmacy Research and Education Foundation, IPREF, has added some seed money for ISU College of Pharmacy students to begin educating the public, including parents about the dangers facing their children every time they open their own medicine cabinet. Combat Prescription Drug Abuse is designed to also educate youth about the dangers of this sometimes-fatal practice.

Prescription drug abuse, in this context, is the practice of taking handfuls of prescription pills, such as OxyContin, Vicodin, or Xanax, with beer or hard liquor, with the goal of getting high, according to Jo Kiester, fourth-year pharmacy student and one of the organizers of the outreach program. “Pharm parties” are becoming common for a number of reasons. It is not illegal to take prescription medications (if you have a prescription) and there is a misconception that prescription drugs are much safer than street drugs because they come from a doctor.

Kiester says that parents need to know that they themselves are potential sources of prescription medications. Many people do not know how long a vial of prescription medications is viable, nor are they aware of the proper way to dispose of medications that are expired or have been in a household for a number of years. Remember, if you have had a vial of tablets or capsules for one year or more, it is time to get rid of them. Keeping pills around leads to risks such as child poisonings and potential theft for abuse.

Getting rid of your old medications is easy: simply grind them up or empty capsules into some coffee grounds or kitty litter. This will prevent curious kids or dumpster divers from getting at these unused medications. For your convenience, your local police station or fire department may be equipped to dispose of medications properly. Do not flush your old pills down the toilet; it may be hard on the environment.

Talking with the teens and young adults in your life is critical. They need to know that abusing prescription medications is illegal and that mixing prescription medications can land them in the emergency room or even the morgue. In addition, there is evidence that once a person tries prescription medications in this manner, he or she is more likely to go on to experiment with more potentially addictive and deadly drugs, such as heroin.

Pharmacy students are finishing an elective class this semester designed to expand student’s knowledge on the topic and hone their counseling skills. In conjunction with other healthcare students and departments at ISU, the Combat Prescription Drug Abuse outreach program will begin offering counseling to youth, parents and educators about the growing problem of prescription drug abuse. However, the program needs additional funds for materials and other expenses. To contribute to the program, see page three of The Refill. For more information about the program, or to book a speaker, contact Andrew Gauss at andrew@pharmacy.isu.edu.
College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists

Dr. Rex Lott is president-elect of CPNP

Rex S. Lott, Pharm.D., BCPP, professor of Pharmacy Practice, Department of Pharmacy Practice and Administrative Sciences, Idaho State University College of Pharmacy, Meridian, has been elected president of the College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists. His appointment will take effect July 1, 2011 and run until 2013.

Dr. Lott also serves as a clinical associate professor with the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, University of Washington School of Medicine and as a mental health clinical Pharmacist, Boise VA Medical Center in Boise, Idaho.

Dr. Lott has practiced and taught psychiatric and neurologic pharmacy for over 35 years. After earning a bachelor of pharmacy degree from Washington State University in 1972, he became an assistant professor in the College of Pharmacy there. He earned a doctor of pharmacy degree from the University of Minnesota in 1977.

Subsequently, for over seven years, he worked as a consultant clinical pharmacist in Minnesota’s State Hospital System where he gained extensive experience working with adult and geriatric psychiatry inpatients as well as with institutionalized, developmentally disabled adults. Working with these populations also allowed him to gain experience in the management of epilepsy in a challenging patient population. He was also a clinical assistant professor at the University Of Minnesota College Of Pharmacy where he shared responsibility for didactic instruction in psychopharmacy and for precepting doctor of pharmacy students on psychiatry clinical rotations.

Since 1997 he has been a full-time faculty member with Idaho State University with a practice in psychiatric pharmacy at the Boise, Idaho VA Medical Center. His practice focuses on inpatient and outpatient adult psychiatry. He precepts doctor of pharmacy students from Idaho State University and, since 2008, has also taught third and fourth year psychiatry residents from the University of Washington in the Idaho Track Residency Program.

He also established a psychopharmacy residency at the Boise VAMC. He is a member of the American Epilepsy Society, the Idaho Society of HealthSystem Pharmacists and the American Society of HealthSystem Pharmacists (ASHP). He served ASHP as a member and chair of the Section of Clinical Specialists’ Programming Committee and as a member of the Commission on Therapeutics. He is a member of the Professional Advisory Board and the board of directors of the Epilepsy Foundation of Idaho, and has served as president of the board.

Happy Holidays from the students, faculty and staff at the ISU College of Pharmacy - Pocatello & Meridian, Idaho
Yes, I will support the efforts of combating prescription drug abuse through education!

Yes, I want to contribute to the ISU College of Pharmacy Combat Prescription Drug Abuse Fund!

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Thank you for your generous support of our outreach programs and dedication to preparing leaders in pharmacy!