American Pharmacist Month
College celebrates pharmacy profession with editorials, game day and open house

The Idaho State University College of Pharmacy students, faculty and staff joined forces in October for the annual celebration of American Pharmacists Month. Student leaders and others held several events including a pharmacists’ appreciation dessert reception for local colleagues, held several health and immunization clinics, sponsored an ISU football game and finished the month-long celebration with an open house at Leonard Hall.

The Professional Pharmacy Student Alliance purchased 50 flu immunizations and provided the shots, free to the public during the open house. In addition to the several events held, students co-authored editorials with faculty members on health care topics. The editorials ran weekly in the Pocatello Idaho State Journal and other state-wide newspapers.

The following is one of the editorials written by second-year student, Lyle Trone and Dr. Christopher Owens, Pharm.D., assistant professor at Idaho State University College of Pharmacy.

To read all five weeks of the student/faculty editorials, visit the College Web site at: www.pharmacy.isu.edu
The link to the editorials in on the home page.

Extinguish Heartburn with the Help of Your Pharmacist
By Lyle Trone and Chris Owens

It’s that time of year again. The time when many of us attend high school football games, when Saturdays are spent watching favorite college football teams and wearing their colors with pride, the time of year when the NFL consumes our Sunday and Monday nights and Major League Baseball playoffs take up the rest of our week.

It’s also the time of year when we knowingly, recklessly, and often gleefully gorge ourselves on the foods and snacks that go so well with our favorite sports pastimes: hot dogs, nachos, burgers, fries, and soda pop.

While the fun may come before and during the game, for many people it’s the post-game wrap up that is hard to take and not only because the team we were rooting for may have lost in overtime. All that snacking was great going down, but later comes back with a vengeance. It’s like a fire starts with no way to put it out. Of course we’re referring to

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As a medical term, heartburn, or “pyrosis” (from the Greek word “to burn”) is a symptom of stomach acid refluxing (or bubbling back up) into the throat. It is described as a burning chest pain or a feeling that food is coming back up, along with an acidic or bitter taste. The pain and burning often gets worse when lying down or bending over and if it strikes at bedtime, can result in a miserable and sleepless night.

So how does this happen? How can something so good turn so bad? To better explain, we need to take a look at what happens once food is swallowed. When we swallow, food passes through a tube called the esophagus, which leads to the stomach. Once in the stomach, the process of digestion begins and special cells that line it begin to produce acid.

The acid doesn’t usually hurt the stomach because it is designed to withstand it, but unfortunately, the esophagus is not so tough and can get burned if acid bubbles back up into it.

As a protection, a special muscular ring called the lower esophageal sphincter (or LES) surrounds the bottom of the esophagus and acts to keep stomach acid from refluxing. When the LES is working properly, heartburn is not a problem. But when it loosens up or relaxes, the contents of the stomach can back up and cause heartburn.

As it turns out, there are many things that can cause the LES to relax. Some of the most common culprits are those snacks we love to eat: fatty or greasy foods, garlic, onions, tomato sauce, and chocolate. Caffeinated and carbonated beverages can do it, too. Drinking alcohol and smoking can have the same result as well.

Fortunately, there are many options for treating heartburn, the first and most important (but least fun) being to cut back on things that are known to cause it and avoid eating too close to bedtime. Losing some weight if you’re overweight and propping up the head of your bed by 6-8 inches can sometimes help, too.

If these measures are not enough, your local pharmacy stocks many products available without a prescription that may be helpful, including antacids (like Tums, Maalox, or Mylanta) and other acid-reducing medications (like Zantac, Pepcid, or Prilosec).

But most importantly, your local pharmacy also has a drug expert on staff who can help guide you through the many choices that are available and help you to find the right medicine for you, depending on your symptoms, other medications you take, and other medical conditions you have.

While some symptoms and medical conditions can safely be treated with over-the-counter medicines, your pharmacist will also be able to tell you when you really shouldn’t be treating yourself and when you need to see a physician for further testing or stronger treatments. For example, if you have heartburn symptoms that are accompanied by difficult or painful swallowing, unexplained weight loss, or severe nausea, you need to see your doctor as soon as possible.

Also, if you’ve had heartburn for a long time, it could mean that you have a more serious condition called gastroesophageal reflux disease or GERD, which can have serious consequences as well as ruin your enjoyment of favorite pastimes, especially at this time of year.

So if you are one of the millions who suffers from heartburn, now is the time to talk to your pharmacist. He or she is ready, willing, and able to provide you with the information you need to get the relief you’re looking for.

ISU College of Pharmacy alumnus George M. Sedlmayer Jr., ’66, will retire from his 34-year career as a pharmacist with Fred Meyer at the end of the year.

During his career, the Pocatello resident has served as a mentor to many ISU students including Ha Nguyen and Daren Kunz, pictured left.

George and his wife, Helen, are the parents of three children; Michael, Mary and Patrick.

Helen has retired from her career as the manager of the Idaho State University Civic Symphony.

“We are honored to have such a distinguished professional as an alumnus of the College,” said Dan Dean, director of development. “George is not only a great pharmacist, but a great man.”