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American Pain Society Endorses FDA Guideline for Medication Disposal

GLENVIEW, IL, Dec. 3, 2009 – Calling it “an important first step in attempting to reverse an escalating public health menace caused by diversion of prescription opioid pain medications,” the American Pain Society today announced its support for a new FDA initiative to encourage consumers to remove unused pain drugs from home medicine cabinets.

“Death from prescription drug overdose is fast becoming the most common accidental cause of death throughout the United States and results in many thousands of needless deaths each year,” said APS President Charles E. Inturrisi, PhD, professor of pharmacology, Weill Cornell Medical College, New York. “One necessary step in reducing drug diversion without harming patients is to facilitate the removal of medications, and in this regard we applaud the FDA for gathering, publishing and advertising disposal guidelines for drugs which are most likely to cause harm,” he said.

The FDA, in collaboration with the Office of National Drug Control Policy, recently released drug disposal guidelines and website information, called *Disposal by Flushing of Certain Unused Medications: What You Should Know and Proper Disposal of Prescription Drugs*. On its website, www.fda.gov, the agency recommends that unused high-potency opioids should be disposed by flushing in a sink or toilet.

APS Board Member David Craig, PharmD, clinical pharmacist specialist, H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center, Tampa, said another disposal option is passage of federal and state laws to permit drug take-back programs. “Currently it is illegal for pharmacies to take back unused pain medications, so amending existing laws that prohibit drug take-back programs would allow these agents to be safely destroyed in an environmentally neutral way,” said Craig.

In a letter to FDA Deputy Director for Drug Evaluation and Research Douglas Throckmorton, APS also expressed its support for expanded educational initiatives, such as public service advertisements, to encourage the public to lock all controlled substances, properly dispose of unused drugs, and never share medications with others. “Anyone who thinks about using a diverted medication must realize there is great potential for a life threatening adverse event. Education outreach also should convey this message,” said Craig.

About the American Pain Society

Based in Glenview, Ill., the American Pain Society (APS) is a multidisciplinary community that brings together a diverse group of scientists, clinicians and other professionals to increase the knowledge of pain and transform public policy and clinical practice to reduce pain-related suffering. APS was founded in 1978 with 510 charter members. From the outset, the group was conceived as a multidisciplinary organization. APS has enjoyed solid growth since its early days and today has approximately 3,200 members. The Board of Directors includes physicians, nurses, psychologists, basic scientists, pharmacists, policy analysts and others.

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