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Voices Together: “Talk About Prescriptions”

Signifying the impact that stakeholder collaboration can have on promoting safe and appropriate medicine use

This October marks the 30th anniversary of the National Council on Patient Information and Education (NCPIE) and its 27th annual observance of “**Talk About Prescriptions Month**” (TAP Month). This year’s TAP Month theme is “***Voices Together***,” which signifies the impact that many groups, working together, can have on promoting safe and appropriate medicine use through better medicine communication. ***Voices Together*** perfectly describes the patient-centered *Medicine Education Team* - espoused by NCPIE to reflect the critical importance of high-quality patient-healthcare provider communication whenever medications are part of the treatment regimen.

Voices Together also defines NCPIE’s impactful 30-year history as a multi-stakeholder coalition exclusively dedicated to stimulating and improving medicine communication to consumers and healthcare providers to achieve better health outcomes. NCPIE Chair N. Lee Rucker, M.S.P.H., of AARP’s Public Policy Institute (Washington, DC), said, “Taking medicines has become so common for many people, especially as we age. Before we realize it, we can easily take them for granted. When that happens, we might put ourselves on ‘auto-pilot,’ and forget that the most important voice in our 24/7 world of medicine information is our own! As medicine-users, it is our personal responsibility to listen to our inner voice when our body tells us how our medicine is working, and whether side effects may be problematic. It is up to us to ask questions, of all the professionals on our healthcare team. NCPIE’s theme, ***Voices Together***, reminds us that we are not alone in understanding, using, and managing our medicines.”

Rucker added, “Today’s constantly-evolving science means that medicine-users need to understand the benefits and risks associated with their medicines. That’s why it is important, to always read the written leaflet that comes with prescription medicines, and the Drug Facts information with non-prescription products. It takes many lines of communication - ***Voices Together*** - to get the most value and best health outcomes from our medicines.” This year’s TAP program features a rich inventory of free, downloadable educational resources and on-line tools that healthcare professionals, health program educators, consumers and caregivers can select from to develop a TAP program in their workplace, schools, faith-based settings and throughout local communities-at-large – in October and beyond. The resources listed below represent a compilation of NCPIE’s multiple websites and educational modules:

- www.talkaboutrx.org - NCPIE’s primary website provides regular updates about current NCPIE activities and beneficial weekly “latest news” updates.
- www.mustforseniors.org - **Medication Use Safety Training (MUST) for Seniors™** program equips America’s older adults and their caregivers with information and skills needed to more effectively use multiple medicines safely and appropriately.
- www.bemedwise.org – with a special focus on safe and appropriate use of over-the-counter medicines.
- **Safe Use of Acetaminophen-containing Products:** [Acetaminophen Safe Use for Seniors](#); [Acetaminophen Safe Use College Resource Guide](#); and [Acetaminophen Safe Use for Teen Influencers](#).

- **Taking Action to Address & Prevent Prescription Drug Abuse**, including:
 - o [Maximizing Your Role as a Teen Influencer](#) A workshop module to educate and equip teen influencers – parents, grandparents, teachers, coaches, community and school-based healthcare providers and others – with credible information addressing the growing problem of prescription drug abuse by teens and effective strategies to take action to help prevent it.
 - o [A Resource Kit for College Campuses](#) – Designed to help inform and mobilize college campuses to raise awareness about and address the misuse and abuse of prescription drugs.
 - o [RECOVERY OPENS DOORS](#) – **An Online Resource for Young People in Recovery**, is a new online multi-media resource designed as a real-life “RecoveryPad” to help young people in recovery talk to their friends, other students, individuals, and groups in the community about prevention, treatment, referral for mental and/or substance use disorders and recovery. The RecoveryPad makes it easier for young people to tell their stories, arms them with facts and statistics, provides materials they can incorporate into activities, helps them plan strategies, and provides additional, real-life stories of hope to inspire others. College administrators, project managers, healthcare providers, educators, counselors, community leaders, and others will also find the materials relevant and useful.

NCPIE resources addressing medication adherence improvement, prescription drug abuse prevention and recovery peer-support for young people, for example, were developed collaboratively with input from project advisory teams representing a broad spectrum of stakeholders. These include: representatives from federal and state agencies, consumer, patient and healthcare professional organizations, voluntary health groups with expertise in advocacy, outreach, health communications and program development. In many cases, NCPIE served as a catalyst and convener for these programs.

“**Voices Together**” represents collaboration and getting the message out. NCPIE participates in numerous external public medicine education campaigns including: *Script Your Future* – A National Medication Adherence Awareness Campaign; *Know Your Dose*, by the Acetaminophen Awareness Coalition; The Protect Initiative – working to develop strategies to keep children safe from unintentional medication overdoses; The Alliance for Rational Use of NSAIDs; National Recovery Month Planning Partners; and The Medicine Abuse Project. The links to these and other campaigns appear on the TAP Month page of www.talkaboutrx.org.

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About the National Council on Patient Information and Education (NCPIE)

Organized in 1982, The **National Council on Patient Information (NCPIE)** is a non-profit coalition of approximately 100 organizations committed to stimulating and improving communication between consumers and health care professionals about the safe and appropriate use of medicines. NCPIE works to address critical medicine safe use issues like adherence improvement, prescription drug abuse prevention, reduction of medication errors, and quality improvements in healthcare provider – patient medicine communication, buying medicines safely on-line, and the safe disposal of medicines. For more information visit: www.talkaboutrx.org.

Note accompanying “**Fact Sheet**”

<p>National Council on Patient Information and Education (NCPIE) 200-A Monroe Street, Suite 212, Rockville, MD 20850 Phone: (301) 340-3940 Fax: (301) 340-3944</p>
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A “Talk About Prescriptions” Fact Sheet

Prepared by the National Council on Patient Information and Education (NCPIE)

Americans and Their Medications

- One in three American adults takes at least one prescription medicine.
- 11.5% of American adults take three or more prescription drugs.
- 6.5% of American adults take four or more prescription medicines.
- Nearly half of all Americans aged 55 and above are on a prescription medicine.

Medication Nonadherence

- NEHI - in July 2009 – published a report on that shows the costs of poor medication adherence, or not taking medications correctly. Those costs reach as much as \$290 billion each year, or 13 percent of total healthcare expenditures.
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- IMS Health – a company that specializes in healthcare information – presents a concept that can help us understand at least some of the problems related to not taking medications correctly. IMS Health describes what it calls the “leaky bucket.” Out of every 100 new prescriptions, 30 to 50 percent are not relayed to a pharmacy; 34 to 52 percent are not picked up from a pharmacy; 70 to 75 percent are not taken properly and 80 to 85 percent are not refilled as prescribed.
- Patients frequently do not adhere to essential medications - with substantial consequences to public health.
- Medication non-adherence is an enormous burden to the health care system. Half of the 3.2 billion annual prescriptions dispensed in the United States are not taken as prescribed (5).
- Numerous studies have shown that patients with chronic conditions adhere only to 50-60 percent of medications as prescribed, despite evidence that medication therapy improves life expectancy and quality of life.
- Approximately 125,000 deaths per year in the United States are linked to medication nonadherence.
- Between 33 and 69 percent of medication-related hospital admissions in the U.S. are due to poor adherence, with total cost estimates for non-adherence ranging from \$100-300 billion each year including costs for additional doctor visits, emergency room visits, hospital admissions, and additional medicines.

The Impact of Chronic Disease

- Chronic disease is responsible for seven in 10 deaths, and 75 cents of every healthcare dollar.
- The seven most common chronic diseases in the nation inflict a \$1.3 trillion annual cost on the economy – and that could reach \$6 trillion by the middle of the century. These diseases include cancer, diabetes, hypertension, stroke, heart disease, pulmonary conditions and mental illness.

References

- Forbes, online Who is Popping All Those Pills?; 7/24/12).
- Medication Adherence: Making the Case for Increased Awareness, co-authored by Hayden B. Bosworth, Ph.D., Duke University Medical Center; and the National Consumers League; accessed 9/28/12 @ www.scriptyourfuture.org.
- Pharmacies as the Face of Neighborhood Healthcare; National Association of Chain Drug Stores; accessed 9/28/12 @ <http://nacds.org/wmspage.cfm?parm1=6985>

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