

Resolution 08-02

Supporting a secure, convenient medicine return program to reduce the public health and environmental health impacts of unwanted medicines.

WHEREAS accidental poisonings in Washington State have increased 395% from 1990 through 2006¹, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that drugs caused 95% of the unintentional and undetermined poisoning deaths,² and

WHEREAS unwanted medicines left in the home could increase opportunities for drug abuse, diversion, and teen “pharming,” the slang term applied to the random ingestion of prescription drugs in order to become intoxicated³, and

WHEREAS abuse of prescription pain killers ranks second, only behind marijuana, as the Nation's most prevalent illegal drug problem,⁴ and

WHEREAS over half of the people using prescription drugs for nonmedical reasons obtained them from a friend or relative for free,⁵ and

WHEREAS unwanted medicines disposed to sanitary sewer systems are not completely treated by the wastewater treatment facilities, allowing pharmaceuticals to be released into the environment,⁶ and

WHEREAS unwanted medicines disposed to solid waste systems may end up in landfill leachate, which is pumped to wastewater treatment facilities, eventually allowing pharmaceuticals to be released into the environment,⁷ and

WHEREAS pharmaceuticals have been detected in the surface waters of Washington State and around the United States,^{8,9} and

WHEREAS pharmaceuticals have been found in the drinking water of 24 major metropolitan areas affecting 41 million Americans,¹⁰ and

WHEREAS the number and volume of pharmaceuticals prescribed to U.S. residents has increased dramatically in the past decade,¹¹ with Washington State residents now purchasing an average of 9 prescriptions per year,¹² resulting in greater accumulations in Washington State homes, and

WHEREAS unused or unwanted quantities of prescription and over-the-counter medicines are projected to be substantial, with some studies estimating that between 30% and 80% of patients do not finish commonly prescribed medicines such as pain medicines, antibiotics, and beta blockers,⁶ and

WHEREAS a pilot medicine return project operating in Washington State since October of 2006 by Group Health Cooperative and Bartell Drugs, in cooperation with a coalition of local and state governments and non-profits, has collected more than 11,000 pounds of unwanted household pharmaceuticals, demonstrating the demand and feasibility of such a system,¹⁴ and

WHEREAS pharmaceutical manufacturers currently operate and fund successful drug take-back systems in Canada and several countries in Europe,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Washington State Public Health Association (WSPHA) supports a convenient, safe, secure, and environmentally sound product stewardship program for the collection, transportation, and disposal of unwanted medications from Washington State households to reduce accidental poisonings, decrease illegitimate access to drugs that can lead to abuse, and reduce contamination of our surface and groundwater, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that WSPHA looks to pharmaceutical manufacturers as the most appropriate source of funding and operational expertise for a Washington State take-back system.

Signed by: Nancy Goodloe, WSPHA President 2007-2008

References:

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Supporting Individuals or Organizations:

Washington State Nurses Association

Washington State Association of Occupational Health Nurses

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Karen Bowman, MN, RN, COHN-S, Bowman & Associates, Inc

David Stitzhal, President, Full Circle Environmental, Inc

Suellen Mele, Program Director, Washington Citizens for Resource Conservation

Organizations and Government Agencies Supporting 2008 Legislation (SHB 3064) to create a statewide secure medicine return program:

Association of Advanced Practice Psychiatric Nurses

Bartell Drugs

Breast Cancer Fund

Children's Alliance

Coalition for Clean Water

Environment Washington

Group Health Cooperative

King County

League of Women Voters of Washington

Local Hazardous Waste Management Program in King County

People For Puget Sound

School Nurse Organization of Washington

Senior Citizens' Lobby

Sierra Club Cascade Chapter

Thurston County

Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs

Washington Citizens for Resource Conservation

Washington Food Industry

Washington Organic Recycling Council

Washington State Association of Local Public Health Officials

Washington State Association of Occupational Health Nurses

Washington State Hospice and Palliative Care Organization

Washington State Nurses Association

Washington State Pharmacy Association

WashPIRG

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