

Communications Office

Peterborough County-City Health Unit
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cleanout Campaign Cleans Up!

Health Unit's Medicine Cleanout Campaign Increased Prescription Returns to Pharmacies by 250%

Thursday, May 13, 2010, Peterborough

The Medicine Cleanout Campaign run by the Peterborough County-City Health Unit successfully diverted 250% more leftover and expired medications from April 17-30 when compared to a typical two-week period, with most pharmacies reporting that the amount of returned prescriptions double or tripled during the campaign.

That's a 250% increase when compared to a typical two-week period in which pharmacies normally receive about 78 kg in old medications.

"I'd like to thank residents for heeding this important call to action which greatly benefits the health of our youth, the environment and the community at large," said Dr. Rosana Pellizzari, Medical Officer of Health for the Health Unit. "The success of this campaign is a good reminder that together we can reduce the amount of prescription narcotics available because their misuse is a growing health concern in Peterborough city and county."

Of the 27 participating pharmacies, 12 reported that 198 kg in old prescriptions were returned during the campaign, a 250% increase over the 78 kg they normally receive for this same timeframe. One pharmacy reported receiving 13 times the amount of medications than it would typically expect during a two-week period. In 2006, a five-day medicine clean out campaign involved 19 participating pharmacies and resulted in 59 kg of returned medications.

"There's no doubt the campaign is successful in getting people to clean out their medicine cabinets. We've got 3 buckets filled here compared to the usual half bucket," said Doug Shier, Pharmacy Manager at Sullivan's Pharmacy. "It's a wonderful program. The volume we got in was 60% larger than the campaign three years ago and people are still bringing stuff in - this is great."

Pharmacist Murad Younis of Westmount Pharmacy confirmed the positive impact of the Medicine Cleanout campaign. "We do this on a regular basis, but it was definitely an increase. We remind customers because it's very important for them to clean out their medications so

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they are taking them properly. Some will be expired, other prescriptions are for a purpose that is no longer valid. It is very dangerous. They need to be secured if they are still using them.”

Pharmacists generously pay for the proper disposal of the medical waste – at a cost of about \$80 per large bucket. Of the ten pharmacies that reported their costs, they collectively spent over \$900 to pay for the proper disposal of medications returned during the campaign. Pharmacists also donate their time removing any identifying information from pill bottles, to protect the confidentiality of their patients.

Suzanne Galloway, Health Promoter of the Health Unit’s Substance Misuse Prevention Program reminded the public that, “Safe medicine disposal is a service most pharmacies offer year-round, so people can still return their medications to the pharmacy they do business with, or take it to the hazardous waste depot for safe, free disposal.”

Dr. Pellizzari also expressed her gratitude for the wonderful support of the Peterborough Lakefield Community Police who delivered most of the campaign materials to the pharmacies. Their involvement underlined that the misuse of medications is a community safety concern, as well as a health issue.

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For further information, please contact:

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