



*Michigan Pharmacists*

A S S O C I A T I O N

# News Release

August 6, 2007

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## CONSUMERS URGED TO AVOID PURCHASING PRESCRIPTIONS FROM DIFFERENT SOURCES

One of the issues foremost on people's minds in recent years has been the cost of health care in general and, specifically, the cost of prescription drugs. The Department of Community Health has even established a website for consumers to view prices for some prescription medications at certain pharmacies in areas throughout the state. This website was recently expanded to include a greater number of medications. Visiting a website to search for medication costs of specific items may seem like a good idea, particularly to those who are on a fixed income. However, the Michigan Pharmacists Association (MPA) would like to caution all consumers against shopping around to obtain prescription medications from various sources using this website or similar websites. Doing so is a potentially dangerous practice which can have disastrous results.

Using more than one pharmacy to fill prescriptions means that no pharmacy will have a patient's complete medication history. Pharmacists may not, therefore, be able to appropriately counsel patients, and this could contribute to detrimental effects such as potentially dangerous drug-drug interactions. Side effects and interactions could end up costing consumers more in the long run in terms of hospitalization, follow up treatment and lost work time.

Although it is certainly important to be informed consumers, patients shouldn't focus solely on pricing. Having a pharmacist who can provide appropriate health care, based on the needs of the patient, is equally important. When paying for a prescription, patients are also paying for the healthcare services that their pharmacist provides. Focusing on price alone by comparing prices on a website may cause patients to overlook other important factors that should be considered when choosing a pharmacy or pharmacist.

Having a good, established relationship with one pharmacist can also contribute to saving money. Visiting a pharmacist is not only convenient (no appointment is typically necessary), but pharmacists can help patients by identifying alternative drug choices and less expensive substitutes. Pharmacists know what generic and combination drugs are available. As an important part of a patient's healthcare team, the pharmacist can communicate with prescribers to make sure he or she is being prescribed the most cost-effective and useful medications.

Finally, pricing for medication changes on a daily basis. Consumers should exercise caution and not assume that pricing on the Department of Community Health's website or others is correct and current. Incorrect information has already been posted on this site and keeping a drug pricing website of this magnitude up to date and accurate is difficult, if not impossible. The best way to determine the cost of a prescription medication remains calling or visiting the pharmacy and inquiring directly. Having incorrect information may be equally detrimental as having no information whatsoever.

The MPA, serving more than 3,000 pharmacy professionals, strives to be a leader in professional and scientific advancement by following its mission of encouraging and supporting its members as the professionals responsible for the delivery of patient-focused care.