



Public Forum

Protecting Your Health

The Bureau of Health Professions

▪ MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY HEALTH ▪ SPRING/SUMMER 2009 ▪ VOLUME 3 ▪ ISSUE 2

Rogue Internet Drug Distributors: A Growing Concern for Health Consumers

Today anything imaginable can be found on the Internet – which as we know, can be good or bad. Combining the Internet with prescriptions for drugs has increasingly put the public at risk. Internet drug distributors that operate in an unapproved, unsafe, and illegal manner have continued to grow in recent years. This is an especially serious concern regarding controlled substances. Selling controlled substances via the Internet violates both federal and state laws. For years, state boards of pharmacy, law enforcement agencies, and federal regulatory agencies have been battling this epidemic. Unfortunately, the autonomy and prevalence of foreign-operated sites, which lie outside of the United States’ jurisdiction, pose a regulatory challenge. States are trying to regulate Internet drug distribution by imposing out-of-state pharmacy licensing requirements, requiring valid patient-practitioner relationships, and creating new controlled substance laws. These measures help states weed out illegal drug distributors and provide a mechanism to sanction drug distributors that dispense without a license. There are many illegal

Internet drug distributors selling prescription medications based only on an online questionnaire, giving patients’ easy access to a variety of medications, including controlled substances.



The Drug Enforcement Administration is trying to stop Internet drug trafficking by using the Automation of Reports and Consolidated Orders System (ARCOS) to identify high or excessive volume purchases. ARCOS can be used to determine which retail pharmacies and practitioners are likely to be involved in the illicit distribution of controlled substances via the Internet. Purchasing drugs from an unlicensed, unregulated Internet drug distributor is not only illegal, but it is also very dangerous. To help patients identify properly licensed facilities, the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) refers citizens to the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (NABP) *Verified Internet Pharmacy Practice Sites*™ (VIPPS®) program. The VIPPS accreditation seal (pictured above) tells patients that a particular website has complied with all licensing and inspection requirements in each state. The VIPPS seal also confirms that the website has been compliant with patient rights to privacy, authentication and security of prescription orders, and the availability of meaningful consultations between patients and pharmacists. This VIPPS seal is the most effective way to ascertain that a website is legitimate. The NABP is launching a new initiative called the Internet Drug Distribution Identification (IDDI) program to assist patients with purchasing medications safely online by establishing a database of Internet sites involved in legal distribution and dispensing of prescription medications.

For more information about VIPPS, IDDI, or ways to assure an Internet pharmacy is safe and legal, call NABP at (847) 391-4406 or visit their website at www.nabp.net.

MAPS - Reducing Drug Abuse in Michigan

The Michigan Automated Prescription System (MAPS) is a prescription monitoring program operated by the Bureau of Health Professions for use by licensed health care professionals who have a controlled substance license. It is an effective tool used to identify and prevent “drug diversion” at the prescriber, pharmacy and patient levels. Drug diversion refers to the misuse of drugs that are intended for legitimate medical treatment. Prescription data submitted from pharmacies and physicians for dispensed drugs listed in Schedules II-IV controlled substances are stored in a database. Practitioners and pharmacies can query the database to request patient-specific reports. These reports allow the physician and pharmacist to review their patients’ controlled substance prescription records, which can reduce concerns a physician may have about a patient receiving controlled substances from other providers. Over 30 states have a similar prescription monitoring program and the federal government recently enacted a law requiring all states to operate a similar program.

(continued on page 2)

Inside This Issue

- **Rogue Internet Drug Distributors**
- **MAPS—Reducing Prescription Drug Abuse in Michigan**
- **Michigan Dietetic Association**
- **An Important Resource for Michigan Citizens Facing Cancer**
- **UPDATE: Michigan Medical Marijuana Program**
- **Infant Dental Benefits for Medicaid Recipients**
- **New Health Professions to be Licensed in Michigan**
- **What is “off label” prescribing?**
- **Q & A**
- **People Contributing to this Issue**

The MAPS program recognizes the legitimate need for controlled substances in healthcare. It promotes the appropriate use of controlled substances for legitimate prescribing and dispensing of controlled substances while deterring drug abuse, theft and illegal sale of these drugs. You may refer your physician to MAPS to alleviate any concerns he/she may have regarding your prescription drug use. If you or someone you know is misusing prescription drugs, be advised that increasing numbers of physicians are tracking their patients' drug use through MAPS. For more information on MAPS, please visit the website at www.michigan.gov/healthlicense or call 517-373-1737.

The Michigan Dietetic Association A Nutrition Information Resource for You

The Michigan Dietetic Association (MDA) is a professional organization, established in 1929, with a membership of over 2,000 Registered Dietitians (RDs). The MDA serves the residents of Michigan in settings such as healthcare facilities, schools, public health departments, long term care facilities (such as nursing homes), wellness/fitness centers, food service operations, pharmaceutical sales, research, and private practice. The organization's mission is to serve the public through the promotion of optimal nutrition, health and well-being.

Registered Dietitians are trained to provide medical nutrition therapy. Through this therapy, RDs assist with the treatment of conditions such as diabetes, obesity, kidney disease, cardiovascular disease, and gastrointestinal disorders. RDs are also able to effectively counsel pregnant and nursing mothers, children with allergies and growth difficulties, as well as those struggling with eating disorders. For credible, science-based nutrition information, or to contact a registered dietitian in your area, consult the Michigan Dietetic Association at www.eatrightmich.org, or call (586) 774-7447.

As an affiliate of the American Dietetic Association, the Michigan Dietetic Association Registered Dietitian is your *Nutrition Expert !!*

An Important Resource for Michigan Citizens Facing Cancer

If you or someone you care about has been diagnosed with cancer, you need information you can trust. But, today's difficult economic climate is making it increasingly challenging for people to find assistance, at a time when they need it more than ever. The Cancer Information Service (CIS) can help.

The CIS is a program of the National Cancer Institute (NCI), the federal government's lead agency for cancer research. For over 30 years, the CIS has provided the latest, most accurate cancer information to patients and their families, health professionals, and the public. In addition to providing helpful cancer related information and free publications, CIS can also direct people to other available resources that may be able to provide additional support.

We encourage you to call the CIS at 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237). Trained CIS information specialists can answer questions about cancer risks and prevention, screening tests, symptoms, diagnosis, latest treatments, clinical trials (research studies with people), and support organizations. Information specialists can share information directly, send written materials tailored to specific needs, conduct clinical trials searches, and help navigate cancer information on the NCI website, at <http://www.cancer.gov>.

The CIS answers calls in English and Spanish between 9 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. local time, Monday through Friday. Callers with TTY equipment may call 1-800-332-8615. Internet users can obtain CIS assistance through *LiveHelp*, an interactive service available on the NCI Web site at <http://www.cancer.gov/livehelp> from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. Monday through Friday.

UPDATE: Michigan Medical Marijuana Program

In 2008, a ballot measure was passed allowing Michigan residents to use marijuana for certain medical conditions. The Michigan Medical Marijuana Program started accepting applications on April 6, 2009. The application forms, instructions and physician attestation forms have been available on the website since March 30, 2009. Between April 6, 2009 and May 29, 2009, the department received 2,185 applications. During that period of time, the department issued 1,221 patient registration cards and 421 caregiver registration cards. The new phone number for the program is 517-373-0395.

Please feel free to call the MMP staff if you have questions after reviewing the forms and instructions on the website at www.michigan.gov/mmp.

Infant Dental Benefits for Medicaid Recipients

Tooth decay is the most common chronic disease of childhood. The pain, suffering and costs of treating primary teeth for dental decay are preventable. By performing a “caries risk assessment”, (which means determining the likelihood of developing tooth decay) and applying fluoride varnish as soon as the primary teeth erupt, much of the early childhood caries process can be prevented.

Since very young children see their primary medical providers often during the first two years of life, it is also appropriate for the initial caries risk assessment and fluoride application be performed at these visits. Medicaid is reimbursing medical providers for applying fluoride varnish to their 0-2 (up to age 3) children at the well baby and Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) program. The EPSDT program is the child health component of Medicaid. It's required in every state and is designed to improve the health of low-income children by financing appropriate and necessary pediatric services. Up to 4 applications of fluoride varnish will be allowed in a 12 month period. These are provided at local health departments in your area.



The Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) will supply free fluoride varnish to Medicaid medical providers for their Medicaid recipients for the period of October 1, 2008-September 30, 2009. The objective of this program include the following:

- To encourage Medicaid medical providers to incorporate oral screenings and apply fluoride varnish to infant and toddler teeth at well baby and EPSDT exams. This is combined with the oral screening, a caries risk assessment, and providing other dental health guidance.
- Referral to a “dental home” by age 1 is indicated especially for the children in the high or moderate risk category. A dental home is considered a place where the child can receive preventive and restorative dental care on a continuous basis.
- To supply free fluoride varnish through MDCH for the period October 1, 2008 through September 30, 2009, as long as supply lasts.

For more information, contact your local health department or call 517-335-8388.

New Health Professions to be Licensed in Michigan

Since the first edition of the *Public Forum* was published in Winter 2007, the Bureau of Health Professions has taken on the responsibility of licensing and regulating five new professions:

Acupuncturists (Public Act 30 of 2006)
Athletic Trainers (Public Act 54 of 2006)
Dieticians and Nutritionists (Public Act 333 of 2006)
Massage Therapists (Public Act 471 of 2008)
Speech-Language Pathologists (Public Act 524 of 2008)

Since administrative rules for each profession must be promulgated before the licensing process can begin, licenses have not actually been issued for any of the professions listed above.

We anticipate the licensure process will begin in spring 2010 for Acupuncturists and fall 2010 for Athletic Trainers. The Board of Dietetics and Nutrition has been appointed by the Governor, however, they are still in the early stages of developing administrative rules. The Boards of Massage Therapy and Speech/Language Pathology have yet to be appointed by the Governor’s office, so it is uncertain when the licensure process will begin for these two professions.

Information about these professions, and others currently licensed/regulated by the Bureau of Health Professions, can be found on our website at www.michigan.gov/healthlicense.

What is “off label” prescribing?



Off-label use of a drug is the practice by physicians of prescribing pharmaceuticals for a purpose outside the scope of a drug's originally approved label, which describes what the drug is intended for. This originally intended use is called the “indication”. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requires numerous clinical trials to prove a drug's safety and efficacy in treating a given disease or condition. However, once the FDA approves a drug for prescription use and determines the appropriate administration, they do not attempt to regulate the usage of the medicine. Thereafter, physicians are free make decisions about how to use a drug based on their best judgment. It is perfectly legal in the United States and in many other countries to use drugs off-label, including controlled substances. It is a common misconception by the public that it is not legal for a physician to prescribe drugs for off-label use. Actually, it is only unlawful to market, advertise, or otherwise promote the off-label use of a drug. Although the FDA does not regulate physicians’ practice of off-label prescribing, the United States federal government does aggressively pursue criminal and civil cases against pharmaceutical companies and their employees for actively promoting off-label uses of prescription drugs.

Off-label prescribing by physicians is a very common practice in this country. In fact, some drugs are used more frequently off-label than for their originally intended use. About 20% of all drugs are prescribed for off-label use. This is even higher with certain types of drugs. Around 30 % of psychiatric and cancer drugs are prescribed for off-label use. More than 50% of cancer patients receive one or more off-label drugs to treat this illness. Off label prescribing is particularly common in pediatrics, since new drugs are often not specifically tested for safety and efficacy in children. As a result, between 50 percent and 75 percent of all medications prescribed by pediatricians to children in the U.S. are for off-label applications. It is likely that you are now using or will use in the future an off-label medication.

Q & A

Question: Can my general dentist (D.D.S.) perform special functions, such as orthodontics (straightening teeth), prosthodontics (tooth replacement), periodontics (treating gum disease), pediatric dentistry (children’s dental care), endodontics (treating the pulp or nerve of a tooth), or oral pathology (treating diseases of the mouth)?



Answer: Yes, the general dentist (D.D.S.) can perform these specialty functions if they have received the training, and thus, possess the skills to perform these services. However, they cannot hold themselves out to the public or advertise as one of these specialists unless they are duly certified in the specialty through an approved certifying body (such as the American Board of Orthodontics). This is described in rule ([R 338.11525](#)) of the Michigan Board of Dentistry administrative rules.

To determine if a dentist has a specialty certification, check our website at [Verify a License](#).

People Contributing to this Issue:

- **Perry Bell**, Departmental Analyst
Professional Practice Section, BHP, MDCH
- **Steve Creamer**, MA, Manager
Professional Practice Section, BHP, MDCH
- **Susan Deming**, RDH, RDA, B.S., Education/Fluoride Coordinator,
MDCH (Infant Dental Benefits for Medicaid Recipients)
- **Doreen Lyman**, Departmental Analyst
Professional Practice Section, BHP, MDCH
- **Michigan Dietetic Association**
- **Jennifer Milczarski**, Student Assistant
Professional Practice Section, BHP, MDCH
- **National Cancer Institute**
(An Important Resource for Michigan Citizens Facing Cancer)

Readers' comments are invited. Please e-mail comments and suggestions to the editor at: dalyman@michigan.gov or write to Public Forum Editor, Doreen Lyman, BHP, MDCH, P.O. Box 30670, Lansing, MI 48909.

MDCH is an equal opportunity employer, service and program provider.

CONTACT THE BUREAU OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS

By Mail:

Bureau of Health Professions
P.O. Box 30670

Lansing, MI 48909-8170

By Phone: (517) 373-8068

Website:

www.michigan.gov/healthlicense

Melanie Brim, Director

Bureau of Health Professions

This newsletter is a periodic publication of the
Department of Community Health,
Bureau of Health Professions.

*Michigan Department
of Community Health*



Jennifer M. Granholm, Governor
Janet Olszewski, Director