

Keep old prescriptions out of the wrong hands

As pharmacists, we play a major role in patients' lives; not only by dispensing prescription medications, but also by providing valuable information about pharmaceutical drugs.

Being a pharmacist for more than 30 years, I realize our responsibility doesn't end there. We also share the job of taking care of our earth and keeping it free of pollutants such as expired or unused pharmaceutical drugs.

Some of the more than \$300 billion worth of prescription drugs used by Americans every year are flushed or poured down the drain, making their way through the sewage treatment process and into the waterways.

Wastewater treatment processes can't always remove the pharmaceuticals, therefore they can end up in local waterways. This can cause adverse effects on fish and other aquatic wildlife, as well as unintentional human exposure to chemicals in the medications.

There are also many other safety reasons to properly dispose of expired drugs and to keep them out of the wrong hands. We often hear horror stories about a popular teen

trend called "Pharm Parties" where young people come together with the sole purpose of collecting and ingesting all the prescription drugs they can find from a variety of places.

Often, people have many drugs left after a loved one dies and family members simply don't know what to do with the drugs. Bringing the remaining medications to a drug take-back event is the best solution to properly dispose of the medications and to keep them from being misused or abused. In addition, the proper disposal of medications also reduces pollutants in our local environment. You can make a difference. Help keep our local waterways and landfills clean, and even save lives by getting rid of old or unwanted drugs properly through the Project Rx event.

Project Rx is a drug take-back program that began in 2010 as a collaboration between Bon Secours St. Francis Health System and several other organizations from the Upstate of South Carolina. Project Rx is about "protecting our rivers and our residents by properly disposing of medicine," whether it is for environmental protection, pharmaceutical educa-

GUEST COLUMN



Roseanne Becher is the director of Pharmacy at St. Francis Eastside. Bon Secours St. Francis Health System is one of the founding partners of Project Rx, a community collaboration aimed to protect our rivers and residents by properly disposing of medicine. Our next Project Rx event date is Saturday, April 27, from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. For more information, visit ariverremedy.org.

tion or drug abuse prevention. We always support safe, appropriate medication disposal and we are proud to be a part of Project Rx.

The upcoming Project Rx event is the sixth Project Rx

since it began in 2010 and the need for safe drug disposal is still very much needed. However, a big component of Project Rx is a patient's responsibility to bring old drugs to various locations for disposal and we make it easy with *no questions asked*. The service is also free to community households.

Project Rx serves as a significant public safety benefit from our community partners to our community members. Bon Secours St. Francis Health System, Renewable Water Resources (ReWa) and the Greenville County Sheriff's office are just some of the partners working with Project Rx to actively decrease the amount of old pharmaceutical drugs in our community.

During the last Project Rx in September 2012, we collected 1,219 pounds of unwanted medication, meaning that is more than 1,000 pounds of drugs that will not fall into the wrong hands and be used illegally, end up in a landfill or pollute our waterways after being flushed down the toilet.

It is time now to start going through your medicine cabinets and collecting your old and unwanted prescriptions, over-the-counter medications, vita-

mins and supplements, and veterinary medications. Remember to use a black permanent marker to block out any personal information on labels, but leave the drug name visible to ensure proper disposal procedures.

In addition to proper disposal, the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control recommends a few ways to reduce unwanted medicines: Buy only what you need, centralize all medications in one location in your home (limit purchasing products you already have) and say no to samples that you won't use. Our next Project Rx event is on Saturday, April 27, between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Stop by any of our drive-through locations to do your part in keeping our waterways and environment clean!

Locations: St. Francis Millennium near CU-ICAR, 2 Innovation Drive, and McAlister Square at 225 South Pleasantburg Drive. More than 20 other drop-off sites will also be available throughout the 11-county DEA district. Full location details are continually updated at www.ariverremedy.org/locations.