Vermont Pharmacist Association
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Building One Voice for Pharmacy!

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Marci Wood, Editor

Vermont News

Walgreens – Rite Aid Merger: Survey Results

With the Walgreen's proposed acquisition of Rite Aid, we posed 3 questions to our members. Here are the questions and the results:

1. Is the proposed merger in the best interest of patients?
Only 7% of respondents felt that patients were likely to see some benefit from the merger.

2. Is the proposed merger in the best interest of pharmacists?
Less than 2% of respondents felt the merger was a positive for pharmacists. Conversely, 82% said no.

3. Is the proposed merger in the best interest of the profession?
Once again, the vast majority of pharmacists felt if the merger were to go through, there would be a negative impact on the profession as a whole.

Comments from the members included:
- Too great a percentage of the profession will be controlled by just one employer.
- The potential loss of rural pharmacy locations
- The potential for innovative pharmacy practices to be decreased.
- The loss of jobs, the decrease of salaries, and the squeezing of independent pharmacies out of the market place
- Pharmacists would have greater demands placed on them with further reductions in staffing.

The Vermont Pharmacists Association Board will present the results of this survey to our Congressional Delegation. You can make your feelings known about this merger by contacting your congressional delegation:
- Senator Leahy
- Senator Sanders
- Representative Welch

Anthony Otis Recognized at Fall Meeting

While Otis & Kennedy remains the VPA lobbying firm, Anthony Otis is retiring from practice. In recognition of Anthony Otis' significant contribution to the Profession of Pharmacy in VT, Executive Director Jim Marmar presented him with a piece of artwork at our Fall CE & Business Meeting.

"To Anthony Otis: With great appreciation, admiration, and approval we honor you with this gift of art that is as timeless as your support has meant to Vermont pharmacists. Friendship by one and all, the Vermont Pharmacists Association."

Stephanie Buffum Recognized as Distinguished Young Pharmacist of the Year

The 2015 VPA Distinguished Young Pharmacist of the Year award winner is Stefanie Buffum, PharmD! Tom White of the Pharmacists Mutual Insurance Co, the sponsor of the award, poses with Stefanie. We congratulate her for achievements!

This award was designed to acknowledge young pharmacists for individual excellence and outstanding contribution to their pharmacy association and community. It was presented Sunday, October 25th, at the fall VPA CE Conference held in Colchester.

2015 VPA Scholarship Winners

Congratulations to the following student pharmacists who were chosen as recipients of the 2015 VPA Scholarship:

- Ryan Guilaran
- Jillian Donovan
- Marci Wood
- Janelle Puleo

Faculty Position Available

Sarah Tatko, the academic coordinator for Vermont's first developing Physician Assistant Program in Rutland at the College of St Joseph, contacted the VPA looking for a pharmacist to teach 3 pharmacology courses for our didactic phase of the program. The program is matriculating their first class next June.

For more information, please contact Sarah - here is her contact information:

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Save the Date: Vermont Legislative Day

Next year’s Vermont Pharmacists Day will be held on January 22nd at the Statehouse in Montpelier.

Upcoming Board of Pharmacy Meeting

The next meeting of the Board of Pharmacy will be held at 9 AM on December 16th. The meeting will be held on the 3rd floor of the City Center, 89 Main Street in Montpelier.

National Pharmacy News

First Reversal Agent Approved for Pradaxa

The FDA has granted accelerated approval to Praxbind (idarcuizumab, Boehringer Ingelheim) for use in emergency situations when the reversal of blood thinning effects is needed in patients taking Pradaxa (dabigatran, Boehringer Ingelheim). Praxbind is the first reversal agent approved specifically for Pradaxa, and works by binding the drug to neutralize its effect. This is the only specific reversal agent currently approved for any of the novel oral anticoagulants.

Praxbind’s safety and efficacy were studied in three trials involving a total of 283 healthy volunteers (participants that did not require Pradaxa for its anticoagulant effects). In these volunteers, giving Praxbind resulted in an immediate reduction in the amount of unbound Pradaxa in the blood. In this study, the most common side effect of Praxbind was headache.

Another trial involved 123 patients given Praxbind due to uncontrolled bleeding or because they required emergency surgery during Pradaxa therapy. The anticoagulant effects of Pradaxa were fully reversed in 89% of patients within 4 hours of Praxbind therapy. Common side effects seen in these patients included hypokalemia, confusion, constipation, fever, and pneumonia.

Two Question Screening Tool Can Help Identify Patients with Substance Use Disorders

The impact of a brief screening for illicit drug use was studied at 2 Veterans Affairs clinics. A total of 1,283 adult patients at these VA clinics were screened using the tool between February 2012 and April 2014. The two questions asked to patients were:

1. “How many days in the past 12 months have you used drugs other than alcohol?” An answer of 7 or more days met this criterion. If patients answered less than 7 days, they were not asked question 2.
2. “How many days in the past 12 months have you used drugs more than you meant to?” An answer of 2 or more days met this criterion.

The tool proved useful in identifying patients with possible substance use disorders in the busy primary care setting at the VA. As the population studied was mostly male adults, further study of this tool’s benefit in other patient populations is warranted. The full article can be found online in JAMA Internal Medicine.

First Biosimilar Insulin Set to Come to Market

Under an agreement, Sanofi granted Eli Lilly and partner Boehringer Ingelheim a licence allowing them to manufacture and market Basaglar in the Kwikpen device in the US on December 15, 2016. As part of the deal, Eli Lilly will pay royalties to Sanofi, while the remaining settlement terms were not disclosed.
Eli Lilly indicated that with the resolution of the litigation, it plans to pursue final FDA approval of Basaglar. "The settlement agreement...provides us with certainty as it relates to our US launch timing," explained Eli Lilly general counsel Michael Harrington, adding "this enables us to focus our efforts on preparing to successfully market and launch Basaglar in the US."

In September last year, the European Commission approved Eli Lilly and Boehringer Ingelheim's insulin glargine product as a biosimilar version of Lantus. The product is known as Abasaglar in Europe.

CDC Letter Praises Pharmacists

In a letter to the American Pharmacists Association from Anne Schuchat, MD, Assistant Surgeon General and Principal Deputy Director of the CDC, the CDC recognized the accomplishments of the profession in improving the health of communities and the growing impact of pharmacists. Specifically, the letter praised pharmacists for improving vaccination rates and working collaboratively with other providers to improve patient care. The letter also recognized the impact of APhA’s immunization training program, which has trained more than 260,000 pharmacists in the 20 years it has been offered.

The full text of the letter can be found on the APhA website.

Study Finds Supplement Use Related to 23,000 Emergency Department Visits Annually

CDC and FDA researchers report that an estimated 23,000 emergency department visits are caused by dietary supplement use. The study used surveillance data from 63 US emergency departments obtained from 2004 to 2013 to describe visits related to adverse events of dietary supplement use, and additionally estimated 2,154 hospitalizations due to supplement use. According to the surveillance data, hospitalizations often involved young adults between 20 to 34 years of age and unsupervised children. Not considering the unsupervised ingestion of dietary supplements by children, most ED visits involved herbal or complementary nutritional supplements. Products used for weight loss and increased energy were commonly associated with these cases, and patients often presented with symptoms such as palpitations, chest pain, or tachycardia. In older adults (over 65 years of age), common reasons for ED-related supplement use were difficulty swallowing or choking.

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