



News release

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Canadian Patient Safety Week 2008

Knowledge is the Best Medicine. Ask. Talk. Listen.

(Vancouver, BC) – Medication errors are said to affect at least 1.5 million Canadians per year. According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI), one in ten patients receive the wrong medication, or the wrong dose while in hospital. To raise awareness of patient safety issues, and to highlight the important initiatives and innovations related to medication reconciliation happening across the country, the Canadian Patient Safety Institute today launched its fourth annual Canadian Patient Safety Week (CPSW).

Set to take place from September 29 to October 4, CPSW 2008 will see hundreds of healthcare organizations and frontline professionals promoting and sharing information about medication reconciliation within their organizations and communities. Patients and their families will be encouraged to become involved in their own healthcare by knowing their medications, keeping records of them, and sharing accurate medication information with all of their healthcare providers.

“The theme of the fourth annual national campaign – *Knowledge is the Best Medicine. Ask. Talk. Listen.* – will focus on sharing safety advancements with healthcare providers, patients and their families,” states Phil Hassen, CEO of the Canadian Patient Safety Institute. “The week will encourage patients to become involved by speaking up and asking more questions, communicating with healthcare providers, and understanding the important role they play in providing accurate information about their current medications.”

“Patients are key partners with healthcare professionals to ensure medications are used safely and appropriately,” says Hassen. “One of the most important actions patients can do to get the best care possible is to keep an updated list of their medications (both prescription and non-prescription drugs) and to always take this list with them when they visit a healthcare provider. If a patient is unable to keep this list updated, having an advocate, such as a family member be aware of the medications they are taking and keeping an updated list for them is essential.”

Another of CPSI’s initiatives, *Safer Healthcare Now!*, has over 1,000 healthcare teams representing more than 270 healthcare organizations, participating in one or more of ten targeted interventions to reduce the number of deaths and injuries related to preventable adverse events. This quality improvement initiative has engaged over 350 healthcare teams across Canada in medication reconciliation interventions to reduce adverse events in acute and long-term care facilities. A pilot project is also being launched in home care settings in conjunction with CPSW. The goal is to build awareness around the frequency of adverse drug events within home care settings and to increase the home care teams responsiveness and involvement in the pilot.

“British Columbia is working hard to reduce preventable medication errors with a number of medication reconciliation initiatives across the province, including the outstanding examples set at St. Paul’s Hospital and residential care facilities run by Providence Health Care,” said George Abbott, B.C. Minister of Health Services. “Increasing the awareness of medication safety is helping us deliver high-quality, safe patient care.”

Medication reconciliation begins with creating a complete and accurate list (Best Possible Medication History – BMPH) of medications that patients are currently taking and comparing the list to medication orders at transition points (admission, transfer and discharge), in order to ensure that all changes are intentional and communicated effectively.

“We hope that CPSW will increase awareness of and involvement in medication reconciliation,” says Marg Colquhoun of the Institute for Safe Medication Practices Canada (ISMP Canada). “*Safer Healthcare Now!* and Canadian Patient Safety Week provides people with tools they can use to improve safety at transition points in patient care.”

“Regrettably, errors do happen,” adds Hassen. “Our goal is to learn from past adverse events in order to prevent them in the future. Our Canadian healthcare professionals are among the best educated and dedicated in the world. The problem principally lies with processes and systems that need to be improved. The Canadian Patient Safety Institute, through initiatives such as Canadian Patient Safety Week, want to raise the awareness about the challenges facing the healthcare system, and educate the patient on how they can actively participate in ensuring a positive experience by being knowledgeable about their own medication usage, and sharing that information with their caregivers.”

As part of CPSW 2008, CPSI, in partnership with Canada’s Research-Based Pharmaceutical Companies (Rx&D) and the Healthcare Insurance Reciprocal of Canada (HIROC), has developed public service announcements for radio broadcast that will air across the country. Several provinces have also signed on to purchase airtime for the PSA.

“Knowledge is the key to better health and we are proud to work with the Canadian Patient Safety Institute as well as health care professionals and all our partners to promote health living and the safe and appropriate use of medicines,” said Russell Williams, President of Canada’s Research-Based Pharmaceutical Companies.

“HIROC’s continued support for CPSW reflects the growing groundswell of support and participation across all levels and organizations,” adds Communications and Marketing Manager of HIROC, Anthony Fuchs. “When one considers that our vision is *Partnering to Create the Safest Healthcare System*, it simply made good sense to support this unique and worthwhile initiative.”

For further information, visit the CPSW website at www.patientsafetyweek.ca. For information on the *Safer Healthcare Now!* medication reconciliation intervention, visit www.saferhealthcarenow.ca

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