



COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Ricardo Sanchez, Public Member, Chairperson
Jason Weisz, Public Member, Vice Chairperson
Jose De La Paz, Public Member
Kula Koenig, Public Member
Nicole Thibeau, Licensee Member

The Communication and Public Education Committee met July 19, 2022.

a. **Discussion and Consideration of Providing Education to Licensees about the Institute for Safe Medication Practices**

Background

At the January 2022 meeting of the Medication Error Reduction and Workforce Committee, members heard a presentation about the Institute for Safe Medication Practices (ISMP). The presentation included the institute's efforts to reduce medication errors, which relies on health care providers and consumers to voluntarily report medication errors. ISMP officials also meet regularly and share information with the FDA.

The committee also learned ISMP provides many resources to help health care workers prevent medication errors, including tips for preventing errors and "alerts" regarding issues that require immediate attention. ISMP also provides lists of confusing drug names and high-alert medications to help consumers better understand their prescription medications.

Committee members suggested the Communication and Public Education Committee consider opportunities to educate licensees about ISMP and its tools for preventing medication errors.

Summary of Committee Discussion and Action

Staff recommended posting a link to ISMP on the Board's website and publishing an article in The Script describing ISMP and highlighting resources it offers to help pharmacies prevent medication errors. Committee members supported the recommendation. There was no public comment.

b. **Discussion and Consideration of Providing Naloxone Educational Materials for Pharmacists**

Background

At the July 2021 meeting of the Enforcement Committee, members and public speakers discussed challenges in getting pharmacists to furnish naloxone. Some said pharmacists are

Communication and Public Education Committee

July 27-28, 2022, Board Meeting

too busy to furnish naloxone. Others said the naloxone protocol requires pharmacist to engage with patients, but many pharmacists are uncomfortable or do not want to engage with patients.

The committee recommended the Communication and Public Education Committee develop educational materials to assist pharmacists in understanding the value of naloxone and how to operationalize naloxone distribution.

Summary of Committee Discussion and Action

Staff noted the Board's website provides multiple resources for pharmacists furnishing naloxone, including a [training webinar](#), [FAQs](#), [sample naloxone labels](#), and [fact sheets](#) and [screening questions](#) in English and six additional languages. Staff recommended publishing an article in The Script about the Board's online resources to assist pharmacists in furnishing naloxone. Committed members supported the recommendation and also said the article should include examples of how to operationalize furnishing naloxone in retail pharmacies. There was no public comment.

c. Discussion and Consideration of Public Awareness Campaign "Treating Your Pharmacy Staff with Courtesy"

Background

At the June 22, 2022, meeting of the Medication Error Reduction and Workforce Committee, members received a presentation from the American Pharmacist Association (APhA) about the Well-Being Index for Pharmacy Personnel – an online tool that health care professionals can use to self-assess their well-being. The index allows APhA to track levels of reported well-being and distress among pharmacists, student pharmacists, and pharmacy technicians nationally as well as by state, including California.

During the discussion, members expressed concern that a general lack of respect for pharmacists among the public compared to other professionals may contribute to distress on the job. Licensee members on the committee told of being bullied and harassed by customers and their work being belittled as "just putting pills in a bottle." The APhA presenter noted that harassment and bullying by coworkers as well as patients is higher for pharmacy staff who are women and people of color.

Summary of Committee Discussion and Action

Committee members supported developing a campaign to increase public awareness and appreciation for the important role of pharmacy professionals in providing and protecting patient health. Members also directed staff to seek out partnerships with other agencies in developing the campaign and to educate the public about what pharmacists do to ensure consumer safety. There was no public comment.

d. Senate Resolution Designating September 2022 as Opioid, Heroin, Fentanyl, and Prescription Drug Abuse Awareness Month

Background

State Senator Patricia Bates (R-Laguna Niguel) has introduced [Senate Concurrent Resolution 115](#), which would designate September 2022 as Opioid, Heroin, Fentanyl, and Prescription Drug Abuse Awareness Month. The measure is intended to increase public awareness of the dangers and prevalence of abuse of opioids, heroin, fentanyl, and prescription drugs.

The resolution contains important legislative findings, including:

- In 2020, more than 14,800,000 opioid prescriptions were written in California.
- From 1999 to 2020, inclusive, more than 500,000 people died from overdoses related to opioids in the United States. In the 12-month period ending in April 2021, overdose deaths from opioids increased to 75,673 in the United States, up from 56,064 the year before.
- Fentanyl is 50 times more potent than heroin and 100 times more powerful than morphine, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The number of deaths from fentanyl overdoses by more than 2,100% in California in five years. Overdoses of synthetic opioids killed nearly 4,000 residents in California in 2020, with 3,946 attributed to fentanyl, according to the most recent estimate from the CDC and the California Department of Public Health (CDPH).
- Abuse of opioid pain relievers is the strongest risk factor for heroin abuse. Seventy-five percent of new heroin users were first addicted to a legally prescribed opioid drug. Many teens and young adults first use opioids when they are prescribed to them following an injury or routine procedure like the removal of wisdom teeth.
- Drug overdoses kill more people in one year than do the number of motor vehicle fatalities in the United States. Most people who are addicted to opioids cannot taper off, or use less of the drug over time, without help.

Summary of Committee Discussion and Action

Staff recommended posting the measure on the Board's website under [Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention](#) and developing a social media campaign highlighting consumer information about preventing prescription drug abuse on the website. Committee members noted the growing problem of opioid abuse in communities and supported the recommendation. There was no public comment.

e. Update on Communication and Public Education Activities by Staff

1. The Script

Staff reported the next issue of the newsletter is set for publication this summer. Article topics include new regulations, the new Strategic Plan, information about COVID-19 waivers, and notification requirements for PICs and pharmacies when a PIC stops acting as the PIC.

2. Staff Outreach

Staff reported presentations on the pharmacist exam application have been provided at the following schools of pharmacy: Loma Linda University, UCSF, USC, Northstate University, and American University of Health Sciences. Staff has also provided presentations on the intern pharmacist application at USC and UCSF.

Staff also noted the Board hosted a dozen listening sessions in March and April 2022 for pharmacy technicians and pharmacists in preparation for the April 19, 2022, Pharmacy Technician summit. In addition, licensees were invited to complete an online survey on topics related to the summit.

Additional staff outreach activities are listed in **Attachment 1**.

3. News Media

News media inquiries received during the second quarter of 2022 are listed in **Attachment 2**.

4. Educational Resources

Staff reported information for licensees who want to file a complaint alleging pharmacy quotas in violation of [SB 362](#) (Chapter 334, Statutes of 2021) has been disseminated via subscriber alerts. The information also will be published in The Script and a brochure.

Staff also reported the Board's current [pharmacy inspections brochure](#) is being updated to include information about additional documents and items inspectors will review during a site inspection. The revisions are undergoing legal review.

Summary of Committee Discussion and Action

Committee members thanked staff members for their work on these items. There was no public comment.

Attachment 1

Staff Outreach Activities

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Board members and staff participated in the following outreach activities in the second quarter of 2022:

- April 22-23, 2022: President Oh, Dr. Acosta and Ms. Sodergren represented the Board at the California Pharmacists Association annual meeting. Dr. Acosta provided a presentation on compounding requirements. Ms. Sodergren provided a presentation on changes in pharmacy law and updates on Board activities.
- May 14: Ms. Sodergren provided a presentation on changes in pharmacy law and updates on Board activities.
- May 31: Ms. Sodergren provided a brief presentation on the Board's efforts to secure changes in pharmacist authority to provide CLIA waived tests in Senate Bill 409 (Statutes of 2022) as part of the California Society of Health-System's "Pharmacists Policy and Legislative Day."

Attachment 2

News Media Inquiries

News Media Inquiries

Staff responded to the following news media inquiries during the second quarter of 2022:

- April 14: Alex MacLean, Sonora Union Democrat, regarding Save Mart pharmacy in Sonora declining to fill controlled substances prescriptions.
- April 26: Ed Silverman, STAT, regarding revocation of Optum Rx pharmacy license for series of violations jeopardizing patient health.
- May 31: Colin Flanders, Seven Days (newspaper), regarding cease and desist order against Edge Pharma outsourcing facility.
- June 16: Josh Slowiczek, CBS 13, regarding Save Mart pharmacy in Sonora declining to fill some prescriptions for patients.