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ADA Asks Dentists to Enlist in Fight against Prescription Drug Abuse

Washington, D.C., Sept. 25, 2012—The American Dental Association today expressed its support for the Drug Enforcement Administration’s fifth National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day, scheduled for Saturday, Sept. 29, and urged dentists to counsel their patients about how to safely secure and dispose of unused, unwanted or expired pharmaceuticals.

“Medicine abuse has become a real problem in our communities,” said ADA President William R. Calnon, D.D.S. “As prescribers of narcotic pain medications, dentists are well positioned to educate patients about how to keep these drugs from becoming a source of harm.”

Prescription medications are now the most commonly abused drugs among kids ages 12-13 and second to marijuana among young adults, according to 2010 data from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Studies show that a majority of these drugs are obtained from family and friends, often from the home medicine cabinet.

“When used as prescribed, narcotic pain medications are safe and effective at minimizing post-operative pain,” said Dr. Calnon. “But using them for any other purpose is illegal, dangerous and can even be fatal.”
The DEA periodically holds Prescription Drug Take-Back Days for people to bring their unwanted or expired medications to disposal sites across the country. On the last Take-Back Day, April 28, Americans brought a record 276 tons of prescription drugs for safe disposal to more than 5,600 locations, according to the DEA. The DEA has a list of approved disposal sites available at its web site.

“Drug-seeking behavior has changed dramatically in recent years,” Dr. Calnon said. “For that reason, we are also urging dentists to refresh their knowledge about opioid prescribing in the context of modern-day drug seeking behavior.”

The ADA, in collaboration with other health care organizations, offers its members free, online continuing education courses on the safe and appropriate prescribing of opioids.

The ADA is encouraging patients or their caregivers to visit the Medicine Abuse Project to learn more about how to prevent drugs from becoming a source of abuse in their household.

Information is also available on the ADA’s MouthHealthy.org.

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**About the American Dental Association**

The not-for-profit ADA is the nation's largest dental association, representing more than 157,000 dentist members. The premier source of oral health information, the ADA has advocated for the public's health and promoted the art and science of dentistry since 1859. The ADA's state-of-the-art research facilities develop and test dental products and materials that have advanced the practice of dentistry and made the patient experience more positive. The ADA Seal of Acceptance long has been a valuable and respected guide to consumer dental care products. The monthly *The Journal of the American Dental Association (JADA)* is the ADA's flagship publication and the best-read scientific journal in dentistry. For more information about the ADA, visit the Association's Web site at www.ada.org.