



DEA to patients: Don't return unused controlled substance prescription medications to pharmacy

No provisions in Controlled Substances Act or Code of Federal Regulations for pharmacy take back of controlled substances from patients.

Pharmacists should be aware that no provisions exist in the Controlled Substances Act or Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) for a DEA registrant, such as a community pharmacy, to take back controlled substances from a nonregistrant (i.e., individual patient).

However, patients may return an unused controlled substance medication to the pharmacy in the event that the controlled substance is recalled or a dispensing error has occurred, according to a provision in the CFR.

Additionally, individual patients need not receive DEA approval before disposing of their controlled substance medications. For situations in which an individual has passed away, a caregiver or hospice staff member may assist the family with disposal of any unused controlled substance medications. Proper disposal should be carried out using the guidelines specified in the SMARxT DISPOSAL program:

- Do not flush unused medications or pour them down a sink or drain, unless they are one of the 12 products identified by the FDA to be flushed.
- Dispose of unused medications in household trash. (1) remove medication from bottle and place into a sealable plastic bag; (2) if medications are solid, crush them by tapping with a hammer; (3) add kitty litter, coffee grounds, sawdust, or another material that would be unappealing to children or pets; (4) add water; and (5) seal the plastic bag, mix content, and place it in the garbage.
- Check for approved state and local medication collection programs. (These programs have a law enforcement official on hand, pursuant to DEA regulations.)
- If you have any questions, ask your pharmacist.

SMARxT DISPOSAL is a program that teams APhA, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) in an effort to raise patient awareness of the threat posed by improperly disposed of medications on our nation's fish and aquatic resources. Additional information and resources are available at the SMARxT website (www.smarxtdisposal.net), including helpful fact sheets and bookmarks that can be downloaded and printed.

Web links

- [DEA: Questions and answers](#)
- [SMARxT DISPOSAL](#)

Related resources on www.pharmacist.com

News article: [SMARxT DISPOSAL: PhRMA joins APhA, FWS initiative](#)

Joe Sheffer (jsheffer@aphanet.org)

Posted July 3, 2008, 3:00 pm EDT