

## **Ohio pharmacists use education to fight drug abuse**

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COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) ? Ohio pharmacists and the Ohio State University College of Pharmacy are partnering to help educate residents about the abuse of prescription and over-the-counter drugs.

The Ohio Pharmacists Association, the college and Cardinal Health Inc. plan to soon launch pilot programs using local pharmacists to teach residents in Columbus, Mount Vernon and Chillicothe about the dangers of abusing drugs they may find at home.

The partnership was announced Friday at the association's annual meeting, focusing on targeting teen drug abuse.

It follows a recent report by the Ohio Department of Health that showed drug overdoses topped traffic crashes as the leading cause of accidental death in Ohio in 2006 and 2007. Though heroin and other illegal drugs play a big role in those figures, the department attributed the increase to the use of prescription pain medicines.

"The drug problem is moving from the streets to the medicine cabinet," said Kenneth Hale, the pharmacy college's assistant dean for professional and external affairs.

Using the pilot programs as guides, the partnership plans to eventually expand the effort throughout the state. It would build on educational resources compiled by the college and its Generation Rx Initiative, which provides drug safety information to children and young adults through a Web site and in presentations at local schools.

Four Columbus-area pharmacists from Kroger Co. are among those that have agreed to visit area schools for the new program, said Doug Cornelius, assistant pharmacy merchandiser for the grocer's Columbus division.

The state is also taking steps to address prescription drug abuse. It announced last week that it would share a database with Kentucky to help physicians check patients' prescription histories in an effort to prevent drug abusers from crossing state lines to get painkillers and other narcotics from multiple doctors.

Ohio officials hope to develop similar information-sharing agreements with other states.

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