

## **Pharmacists join in abuse fight**

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By [Jeb Phillips](#)

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The people who dispense prescription and over-the-counter drugs are now looking to themselves to counter the abuse of those drugs.

The Ohio Pharmacists Association, the Ohio State University College of Pharmacy and Cardinal Health announced a partnership yesterday to help pharmacists across the state educate their communities about the misuse of medical drugs.

"The drug problem is moving from the streets to the medicine cabinet," said Kenneth M. Hale, assistant dean for professional and external affairs at the OSU College of Pharmacy.

Yesterday's announcement at the annual meeting of the pharmacists association focused especially on abuse of those drugs by teenagers.

Seven percent of Ohio children ages 12 to 17 misused pain relievers in 2005 and 2006, according to estimates from the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Fourteen percent of adults ages 18 to 25 did the same.

The idea for the partnership came from the OSU College of Pharmacy, which began a program called the Generation Rx Initiative about two years ago. The college's faculty, staff and students began gathering educational resources on a Web site, and students began holding informational sessions on campus and in area elementary, middle and high schools.

The new partnership would use some of those same materials but tailor them to different audiences. Pharmacists themselves would be the teachers, either in their businesses or in the community.

Three pilot programs -- in Mount Vernon, Chillicothe and Columbus -- will begin work soon. Their experiences are expected to guide how the partnership works in the rest of the state.

"They presented this to me about 10 days ago," said Doug Cornelius, assistant pharmacy merchandiser for the Kroger Co.'s Columbus division. Four Columbus-area Kroger pharmacists have agreed to work in area schools as part of the program.

Several Kroger pharmacists go into schools each year anyway, to run poison- prevention and other programs, Cornelius said. The new program will be an extension of their role as spokespeople.

"We're just glad to help," he said.

More information about abuse of prescription and over-the-counter drugs is available at <http://pharmacy.osu.edu/outreach/generation-rx>.

[jeb.phillips@dispatch.com](mailto:jeb.phillips@dispatch.com)