

iRx Your Information Prescription

New service promises timely and unique prescription drug information

by Lee C. Vermeulen, RPh, MS; and Greg Zisser, PSW Director of Marketing and Communications

The Pharmacy Society of Wisconsin and the University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics' Center for Drug Policy have developed a new communication tool was officially launched to PSW members on Feb. 1, 2006.

The communication tool is called *iRx: Your Information Prescription*. It consists of valuable new prescription drug information delivered through a weekly alert e-mail and a corresponding Web site for archived information. This medium has the additional benefit of providing hypertext links within the articles. These links can connect the user to local, state or national organizations or news services that may be addressing the same issue.

The information in *iRx* will focus primarily on newly approved drugs, but will also include breaking news and other timely drug-related information. PSW's current goal is to prepare professionally-focused information within 72 hours of significant news-breaking stories that are prescription drug or pharmacy-related issues.

The service, made possible by a generous grant from the National Council of State Pharmacy Association Executives (NCSPA) and Merck contains material developed by the UWHC Center for Drug Policy, and distributed by the Pharmacy Society of Wisconsin. The Center for Drug Policy (CDP) provides a unique perspective from staff members who are both experts in their fields as well as proficient in information retrieval and dissemination. The CDP's constant influx of information from national and local groups will give this service an edge that no other state organization can provide.

iRx will assist pharmacists in staying current with changes in both medications and the medication use process that

directly impact them or their consumers. This resource could be an invaluable tool in helping to bridge the information gap that exists between organizations providing pharmacy-related information.

The service provides PSW with a vehicle to inform its members about newsworthy prescription drugs by providing key practical information regarding the drug products in a brief format. The information will not, however, contain sufficient information upon which to base formulary or other medication use policy decisions.

customized to include each association's state logo.

Unlike PSW's membership, who receive the service free-of-charge, other state associations could be charged a subscription fee. PSW is currently seeking a sponsor to defer eventual subscription costs for *iRx*, but the possibility of a subscription fee for other state associations after an initial six-month period is still pending.

Frequency of the *iRx* issues may vary depending on the number of drugs approved by the FDA and on the circumstances warranting breaking news drug



iRx: Your Information Prescription is a new e-mail and Web communication tool that will alert pharmacy professionals to valuable new prescription drug information on a weekly basis.

You may recall an earlier article in *JPSW* about this project. At the time, it was being developed under the name "Joint Communication Project" to reflect the unique input and specialties of PSW and the CDP. In addition to the name change, the project has evolved into a more specialized communication tool that best utilizes the distinctive expertise of the CDP.

In fact, it is our contention that this material is specialized and valuable enough to fill a niche in pharmacy communications nationwide. That is why, after the initial rollout and testing within PSW's membership, *iRx* will be made available to all state pharmacy associations for their memberships' benefit and will be

alerts. Those factors notwithstanding, *iRx* should average about three issues per month.

This new service promises to improve PSW members' access to valuable drug information while generating much deserved recognition for Wisconsin's top notch pharmacy profession. We're excited to launch this new member benefit and to hear the reaction from PSW members on the value of *iRx* to their practice. ●

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If you have any questions about this article or *iRx: Your Information Prescription*, please contact Greg Zisser at gregz@pswi.org.