

Safe Care Wisconsin

The importance of a current medication list

by Bradley Schermetzler

Safe Care Wisconsin is a collaboration of organizations, including the Pharmacy Society of Wisconsin, formed in 2005 to “improve patient safety by giving patients and their families tools they can use to ensure their own safety.” The first statewide project for the group was launched on Jan. 16, 2008, at a news conference held at St. Mary’s Hospital in Madison.

The “List It. Don’t Risk It.” initiative asks all patients to keep in their wallets or purses an accurate list of all medication names, doses and directions. The initiative includes an ad campaign broadcast over the Wisconsin radio network.

Pharmacist Mike Flint from Mallatt’s Pharmacy in Madison spoke at the news conference in support of the pharmacist’s role in the initiative. “Ask your pharmacist to print out a list of medications that you take, and use that list to fill out your own list. Don’t be shy about asking for help completing your list. It becomes even more important that you show your pharmacist the list if you pick up prescriptions from more than one pharmacy or if you order prescriptions through the Internet.”

Flint was joined by several other health care professionals at the news conference. Kathy Leonhardt, MD, MPH, is the patient safety officer for Aurora Health Care and spoke to the importance of the medication lists. Leonhardt pointed out that many patients have multiple providers writing many prescriptions and that it can be a challenge for patients and caregivers to remember all of their medications. Keeping the medication lists updated and accurate can help patients when filling out medical histories at clinics and hospitals. Leonhardt also advised patients to talk with their health care professionals about their medicines and to ask questions when directions may not be clear.

Heather Grant, RN, works in the emergency department at the University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics. Grant asked patients and families to always be prepared for the unexpected. “We try to find out as much about our patients’ health history as we can in just a matter of minutes so that we do not have to delay treatment. Knowing what medicines you take, the dosage, your allergies, and your physician’s name helps us determine what to do, but more importantly, what not to do when we treat you.”

A list of all medications a patient is taking should be shared

with prescribers and pharmacists to help them recognize and prevent potential problems in both emergency and non-emergency situations. Pharmacists can assist patients by providing updated medication profiles and offering the rewritable “My Medication List” available on Safe Care Wisconsin’s website. The form also contains important contact information as well as an area dedicated to the listing of allergies and adverse drug reactions. Pharmacists can also utilize medication lists currently available to patients in their pharmacies. The intent of the campaign is not to standardize a medication list across the state, but to focus on the importance of all residents learning to keep an updated, accurate list on them at all times. Pharmacists can help to improve the safety of Wisconsin residents by encouraging all patients to carry an accurate list of their medications and to update it after any change in their medications. ●



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