

Caregiver News™



An Alarming Trend Among Teens

A note from Arturo Gonzalez, M.D., Vice President of the American Academy of Pediatricians, Arizona Chapter, states, "Intentional misuse of prescription medications is the biggest teen substance abuse challenge we face today." In Arizona, one out of four 12th-graders abuse prescription pain relievers. That's **twice** the national rate! Aggravating the issue is the perception among both teens and their parents that abusing medicine is not as dangerous as abusing other drugs, and ease of access—medicines are readily available in the medicine cabinet or from friends.

The American Academy of Pediatrics, Arizona Chapter, Arizona Partnership Implementing Public Safety and the Arizona Medical Association are joining with the Arizona Affiliate of the Partnership for a Drug-Free America to launch a new drug education program called Rx360. Rx360 is a research-based program developed to raise awareness of the problem of prescription drug abuse by middle- and high-school-age children. We are asking physicians to consider the following when talking with patients and their parents about prescription drugs.

1. Educate parents about the alarming rise of prescription drug abuse by teens.
2. Let young patients know that abusing medicine can be just as dangerous as abusing illegal drugs.
3. Ask parents to take action by safeguarding their medicine cabinets.

The Partnership also has a community education program that is available free of charge to parents. If you would like to schedule a presentation or would like more information on this project, please contact the Partnership at (602) 400-5432 or by e-mail at PartnerUp@PartnerUpAz.org.

Let's Talk Influenza

By: Beatriz G. Stamps, M.D., MBA, Vice President of Medical Affairs
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Novel influenza A H1N1 (swine flu) is a new flu virus of swine origin that was first detected in April 2009. On June 11, 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) raised the worldwide pandemic alert level to Phase 6 in response to the ongoing global spread of the novel influenza A (H1N1) virus. A Phase 6 designation indicates that a global pandemic is under way. WHO's decision to raise the pandemic alert level to Phase 6 is a reflection of the spread of the virus, not the severity of illness caused by the virus.

It's uncertain at this time how serious or severe this novel H1N1 pandemic will be in terms of how many people infected will develop serious complications or die from novel H1N1 infection. Experience with this virus so far is limited, and influenza is unpredictable.

The symptoms are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills or fatigue. Some people with novel H1N1 flu have also reported diarrhea or vomiting. Severe illness, including pneumonia or respiratory failure, as well as death, can occur. Like seasonal flu, novel H1N1 flu may worsen underlying chronic medical conditions.

In children, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include fast breathing or trouble breathing, bluish skin color, not

drinking enough fluids, not waking up or not interacting with others, being so irritable that the child does not want to be held, fever with a rash, or flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever or worse cough. In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen, sudden dizziness, confusion or severe or persistent vomiting.

People with novel H1N1 flu can infect others and could be contagious as long as they are symptomatic, and possibly for up to seven days following the onset of illness. Children, especially younger children, might potentially be contagious for longer periods.

The CDC recommends the use of oseltamivir, which is also called Tamiflu®, or zanamivir, which is also called Relenza®, for the treatment or prevention of infection with these novel H1N1 flu viruses.

More than 70 countries have reported cases of novel H1N1 infection. The Southern Hemisphere's regular influenza season has begun and countries there are reporting that the new H1N1 virus is spreading and causing illness along with regular seasonal influenza viruses. The U.S. had a total of 40,617 cases and

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LET'S TALK INFLUENZA

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263 deaths (as of July 17) and the H1N1 illness has continued into the summer. In Arizona, there have been 762 confirmed cases and 11 deaths. The U.S. continues to report the largest number of novel H1N1 cases of any country worldwide; however, most people who have become ill have recovered without requiring medical treatment.

The spread may well continue and coincide with the seasonal flu season in the U.S. The vaccine for swine flu is in the testing phase and may be available anywhere from October through December 2009. The vaccine will be distributed to the Yavapai County Health Department, which will decide how distribution will occur based on the risk stratification identified by the CDC. The vaccine is expected to include a two-dose series.

What can we do to limit the spread of swine flu? Whether you're at home, work, school or running daily errands, wash your hands often with soap and water. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and put your used tissues in the trash.

If you're diagnosed with novel H1N1 flu, stay away from others. Stay home from work or school to keep from spreading the virus for seven days after your symptoms begin or until you have been symptom-free for 24 hours, whichever is longer.

For up-to-date information about novel H1N1 flu, please visit cdc.gov/h1n1flu or call 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636).

Source: CDC Website

How to Handle Workplace Conflicts

Three tips to help you solve problems as they arise.

In every workplace there are occasional problems between people. These problems can take up a lot of emotional energy if they get out of hand. It's best to deal with workplace conflict right away, so it doesn't fester and keep you from focusing on doing your job. In every exchange, keep these three tips in mind:

1] Communication is key. Whether you're experiencing conflict with a co-worker or supervisor, try to address the issues in a calm, straightforward way. Present the situation as an opportunity to solve a problem and ask for the other person's help. Set up a time to meet when you won't be rushed, and pick a place where you can talk privately.

2] Always be professional. Keep the focus on the job and your responsibilities to patients. Don't get personal. Criticizing someone is not the way to solve a problem. When you're emotional, it shows in your tone of voice and your body language. That makes the other person defensive, which can lead to rising tension. It helps to maintain a



positive attitude and to use humor to keep tension from building.

3] State the problem as you see it, framing it in terms of the job. Ask if the other person sees the situation in the same way. Be a good listener. Until you both understand the exact nature of the problem, you can't work together to solve it.

Conflict is a normal part of life. But it takes maturity to deal with conflict in an objective way, without anger or hurt feelings. Showing a willingness to work with others to resolve problem situations is the hallmark of a truly professional caregiver.

Smart Food Choices for Seniors

While older adults may need to eat less, they still need certain nutrients to stay healthy. Caregivers can use the Modified MyPyramid for Older Adults as a guide to beneficial food choices for this age group. It's available for download as a graphic printout at nutrition.tufts.edu/docs/pdf/releases/ModifiedMyPyramid.pdf.



Getting Some ‘Gus Therapy’

Recently, Carolyn Hasty, Case Manager for Bridgeway, was asked by the staff at the nursing home where she has clients to bring Gus, her certified therapy dog, to the Easter egg hunt for children of employees. Gus sported a special Easter outfit that included a hat with flowers, a green bunny in one vest pocket and a duck in the other.

Upon their arrival, about 20 little kids descended on Gus, petting, hugging, pushing and pulling on him. One little boy has cerebral palsy and is partly blind. Gus stayed with him for quite a while. Then Carolyn and Gus walked around the courtyard to visit with all of his friends who are patients there. Gus enjoyed playing the “Easter Bunny.” The patients in the dementia unit are special friends of Gus, and he looks forward to visiting. They even held a birthday party for him on his second birthday.

After being pummeled by so many children for about an hour, Gus continued his exhausting morning going from one patient to another. One double amputee always has a dog cookie

ready for Gus when he visits. One always asks Carolyn if she is “spoiling” Gus enough. When she says, “Yes,” he responds, “That’s good!”

Gus was tired, but he accompanied Carolyn to a second nursing home to visit a special friend. The Bridgeway member had been moved there to a locked behavioral unit because of prior suicidal gestures when her husband died. The lady was so happy to see Gus again that she started crying and hugging him. Carolyn gave her pictures of Gus that she had brought and placed them on her bulletin board so that she could see Gus from her bed.

When patients want to spend a lot of time with Gus, Carolyn often leaves them one of his “business cards.” The card, with his picture, tells how he was raised as a guide dog for the blind. When an inoperable cataract was discovered, Gus had a career change and was retrained and certified as a therapy dog. Gus visits nursing homes, hospitals, schools and home-bound people. His card reads, “I’m glad to meet you. This card is a keepsake of our nice visit today.”

A Caregiver’s Toolkit

What caregiver hasn’t searched high and low for a pair of scissors, safety pin or pen and paper to use right now? It’s a bother when the tools you want aren’t at hand when you need them.

A SOLUTION: Bring your own set of “can’t do without” items to your caregiving site. See the list below for ideas. Some items may duplicate what you already carry with you, but having everything in a lightweight, easy-to-access carry-all will make your job easier.

- Antibacterial soap
- Hand sanitizer/wipes
- Disinfectant spray
- Unscented baby wipes
- Unscented lotion
- Petroleum jelly
- Baby powder
- Latex gloves
- Disposable smocks
- Easy-sealing plastic bags
- Compact sewing kit
- Marking pen
- Sticky notepad
- Flashlight and batteries
- All-in-one tool {screwdriver/wrench/pliers}
- Nail file

IMPORTANT REMINDER: To kill germs, use disinfectant wipes to clean items after each use.

Listen Up! Be alert to possible hearing problems in patients if they:

- Don’t respond to your question or greeting unless you’re nearby.
- Give answers that don’t fit with the questions you ask.
- Turn the TV or radio volume up uncomfortably high.
- Complain about people mumbling.
- Often ask you to repeat things.
- Have trouble understanding phone conversations.

Important Announcement

The FDA has approved a vaccine for 2009–2010 seasonal influenza.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced that it has approved a vaccine for 2009–2010 seasonal influenza in the U.S.

The seasonal influenza vaccine will not protect against the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus that resulted in the declaration of a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on June 11, 2009. The FDA continues to work with manufacturers, international partners and other government agencies to facilitate the availability of a safe and effective vaccine against the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus.

Although this year's seasonal vaccine is directed against other strains of influenza expected to be circulating and will not provide protection against the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus, it is still important for those Americans for whom it is recommended to receive the seasonal influenza vaccine. No vaccine is 100 percent effective against preventing disease, but vaccination is the best

protection against influenza and can prevent many illnesses and deaths.

“The approval of this year's seasonal influenza vaccine is an example of the FDA's important responsibility to assure timely availability of vaccine to help protect the health of the American public,” said Margaret A. Hamburg, M.D., Commissioner of Food and Drugs. “A new seasonal influenza vaccine each year is a critical tool in protecting public health.”

Bridgeway Health Solutions hopes

to have as many members as possible vaccinated against the seasonal flu. If the vaccine will be administered in a location other than your office, **please write a prescription for the influenza vaccine.** Several pharmacies may be administering the vaccine, and pharmacists can only vaccinate members with prescriptions. There is work under way to eliminate this requirement, but at the time of this printing a prescription is needed.

Source: U.S. FDA

For More Information

- FDA webpage on influenza vaccine safety and availability: www.fda.gov/BiologicsBloodVaccines/SafetyAvailability/VaccineSafety/ucm110288.htm
- FDA list of strains included in the 2009–2010 influenza vaccine: www.fda.gov/BiologicsBloodVaccines/GuidanceComplianceRegulatoryInformation/Post-MarketActivities/LotReleases/ucm162050.htm
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention seasonal influenza resources for health professionals: cdc.gov/flu/professionals/vaccination
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention key fact about seasonal flu vaccine: cdc.gov/flu/protect/keyfacts.htm

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