



For Immediate Release

March 3, 2008

**In Celebration of National Patient Safety Awareness Week~
AMA ASKS PATIENTS: DO YOU KNOW WHAT'S IN YOUR MEDICINE
CABINET?**

CHICAGO, IL – To help mark National Patient Safety Awareness Week, the American Medical Association (AMA) is calling on patients to be an active partner in their own health care – starting with a simple check of the items in their own medicine cabinet. The theme of this year's National Patient Safety Awareness Week, which begins today, is "A Road Taken Together," and the AMA is offering easy tips for patients and new materials for physicians to help improve patient safety.

"Expired over-the-counter medications, unused prescription drugs, and certain supplements can make the family medicine cabinet a dangerous and confusing place, if not regularly checked and cleaned," said AMA Board Chair Edward Langston, M.D. "Just as the public knows to check smoke alarms when the clocks change, we hope that during National Patient Safety Awareness Week, Americans will now think to check their medicine cabinets."

These tips are a good start to helping patients become a partner in their own health care, and are easy to do.

1. Check the medicine cabinet every year during Patient Safety Awareness Week and safely dispose of expired over-the-counter medicines and unused prescription pills that you no longer need.
2. Make a list of all the medications you take on a regular basis, including supplements. The list should include: Name and dose of medication, which physician prescribed it, date started, why and how the drug is taken and any side effects.
3. Discuss the list with your physician at the next office visit to ensure none of the medications may harm you if taken together, or with alcohol.
4. Keep medications, like prescription pain relievers and sleeping pills, out of reach of young children and teenagers, and do not share prescription medications with family and friends.
5. Download the AMA-AARP tip sheet on ways for patients and physicians to improve their relationship for better health care and safer outcomes from the AMA Web site at www.ama-assn.org.

"It's important for patients to be an active partner in their health care, but we know they can't go it alone," said Dr. Langston. "That's why we've created brand new resources for physicians to help them improve patient safety as well."

A brand-new patient safety resource for physicians is being released today on the AMA's Web site through the AMA's Making Strides in Safety® program. The new toolkit, "Working together to improve care and prevent harm," includes quality measures physicians can use and new strategies to reduce harm. For example, the quality measures can help physicians deliver reliable, evidence-based care for heart failure, and a new strategy details how to reduce harm from high-alert medications, such as sedatives, narcotics and insulin. The AMA's Making Strides in Safety® program also recently created a booklet, "The Physician's Role in Medication Reconciliation" that details issues, strategies and safety principles to optimize the safe and effective use of medications. The booklet includes a medication tip card physicians can share with their patients.

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For more information on National Patient Safety Awareness Week go to www.ama-assn.org/go/npsaw

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