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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Missouri Pharmacy Association Members Press for Important Healthcare Changes

JEFFERSON CITY, MO – Missouri Pharmacy Association (MPA) members gathered in Jefferson City on April 15, 2009 to meet with legislators and discuss critical changes needed in the state's healthcare policies. Pharmacists from around the state spent the day addressing legislation the General Assembly is currently evaluating that will impact the access to and effectiveness of patient treatment in Missouri.

“In the past, the pharmacist's role in providing quality healthcare to Missouri citizens has been underutilized. Now more than ever it is critical that we begin to address some of the obstacles that prevent pharmacists from providing the medication therapy management services they are trained to provide,” Ron Fitzwater, CEO of the Missouri Pharmacy Association (MPA) noted.

Members spent the morning at the Capitol Plaza Hotel receiving updates on legislation that impact their profession and hearing from speakers involved in the legislative process. Speakers included Attorney General Chris Koster, Representatives Bryan Stevenson (R-128), Don Wells (R-147) and David Sater (R-68), as well as Department of Social Services Director Ronald Levy and Board of Pharmacy Executive Director Kim Grinston.

“You play a critical role in ensuring that patients are safe, informed, and healthy,” Attorney General Chris Koster praised.

While there are many healthcare issues up for debate this year, MPA members focused yesterday on proposed regulation of Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBMs) and the expansion of the Pharmacy Practice Act. During the afternoon, members stressed the need to address these issues in personal meetings with their legislators.

PBMs act as a third party in the healthcare coverage of prescription medicine. Representative Stevenson has sponsored legislation to establish transparency in their practices, and curb the harmful effects that they have caused in the past.

“PBMs are established in our healthcare system and they have their place. But I am concerned, as you are concerned, that in a highly regulated world of healthcare and medicine, PBMs operate unregulated and without rules” Koster continued.

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The need to expand vaccination powers granted in the Pharmacy Practice Act of 2007 was also a top priority in discussions. Currently, pharmacists may administer the flu vaccine to patients who visit their pharmacy. House Bill 513, sponsored by Representative Wells, would allow pharmacists to administer vaccinations for shingles, pneumonia, and meningitis under a protocol agreement with a physician. HB 513 would also permit pharmacists to administer these vaccinations at locations other than the pharmacy, providing important treatment to nursing home residents and patients in rural areas.

“With approximately 130 students and practicing pharmacists working to influence pharmacy legislation in Missouri, this year’s event was extremely successful. Lawmakers need to hear from those of us who work directly with the issues they’re debating. We came to the Capitol determined to tell them what we’re facing every day in our pharmacies, how they use the information we gave them will be the most important impact of the day” said Sandra Bollinger, MPA President.

Photos of the event are available upon request.

Established in 1879, the Missouri Pharmacy Association is the professional society representing Missouri pharmacists, united to improve public health and patient care, enhance professional development and advocate for the interest of the profession.

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