

The Safe Meds Awareness Campaign Launched Targeting the Faith Community and Families

The COSHAR Foundation, in partnership with faith organizations, leads a national effort to address the growing problem of prescription drug abuse.

August 21, 2012, Bowie Maryland - - The COSHAR Foundation, a nonprofit health education and awareness foundation located in Bowie, Maryland, in partnership with the faith community and community organizations, has launched a prescription abuse awareness campaign, called "Safe Meds."

A newly-released study from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) found that the percentage of people who abuse prescription pain drugs on a regular basis is on the rise. Although most people take medicines only for the reasons their doctors prescribe, an estimated 20 percent of people in the United States have used prescription drugs for non-medical reasons. This growing trend has made in the headlines in Hollywood with the deaths of award-winning actor, Heath Ledger along with Grammy winning-artists Michael Jackson and Whitney Houston.

Between 2002 and 2010, the rate of "chronic" prescription drug abuse — which means taking prescription drugs for a non-medical reasons on at least 200 days in the last year — increased by 76 percent, the study found.

This issue is not one you would typically think as associated with churches. But, because the church remains the cornerstone in most communities, it can play an important role in combatting this problem, said Dr. Sharon Allison-Otney, MD the Executive Director of the COSHAR Foundation, "Our programs are impactful because we partner with existing, trusted resources in the community to address health and other crises head on within the context of family, community and yes faith."

"The findings from the CDC underscore the need for concerted public health and public safety action to prevent non-medical use of these drugs," researcher Christopher Jones, of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, wrote in the June 25 issue of the journal, *Archives of Internal Medicine*.

The program utilizes the unique and ever expanding National Health Ministry Network (NHMN) of The COSHAR Foundation. The NHMN is a well-developed, multi-denominational network of over 38,500

diverse houses of worship and over 610 community organizations. Members of the NHMN are in every state in the United States as well as several locations, internationally. The foundation provides a mechanism by which these houses of faith can deliver health messages, programs and resources to its congregants and provides technical assistance, program development and support as a free service. The NHMN also encompasses community organizations and has witnessed tremendous growth over the last decade as well as increased membership.

The COSHAR Foundation has developed free toolkits for houses of faith and community organizations to utilize in joining them in spreading the word about prescription drug abuse. This free toolkit has information for the parishioner, the pastors and/or clergy, health ministries and community organizations. The toolkit includes various resources which allow them to effectively address this crisis and is culturally relevant to their communities. The COSHAR Foundation has partnered with Gospel recording artist, Patrick Lundy and the Ministers of Music for this campaign.

The “Safe Meds” program addresses the growing crisis of prescription drug abuse in families, with a particular focus on teens. This program is one of the several ongoing initiatives of The COSHAR Foundation and is funded in part through an unrestricted educational grant from Purdue Pharma. “We are pleased to be able to support The COSHAR Foundation and their efforts to educate their membership about prescription drug abuse. In so many communities around the country, faith based organizations serve as such an important link to people in their neighborhoods. We are thrilled COSHAR has undertaken the project to educate people of all faiths about the dangers of prescription drug abuse,” said Pamela Bennett, Executive Director Healthcare Alliance Development, Purdue Pharma L.P.

About The COSHAR Foundation

The COSHAR Foundation is a 501(c)3 organization dedicated to “Impacting the Health of the World, One Community at a Time.” The COSHAR Foundation’s National Health Ministry (NHMN) includes more than 38,500 diverse houses of worship and over 610 community organizations throughout the country and addresses various community health concerns. *Safe Meds: The COSHAR Foundation’s Prescription Medication program* is sponsored by a grant to the foundation from Purdue Pharma, L.P.

For more information, please contact The COSHAR Foundation at (301) 773-4811 or visit www.cosharfoundation.org.