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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Special Report to Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
Reveals Seniors Waste 43% of Prescription Medicines**

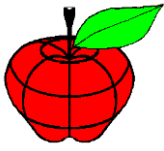
(BELLAIRE, TEXAS – October 9, 2010) Working with the Center on Aging, University of Maine, the Community Medical Foundation for Patient Safety, a research group specializing in patient safety research and education discovered that American seniors waste approximately 43% of their prescribed medicines. Findings from an exploratory study including the cost of wasted medicines were submitted to Donald Berwick, M.D., Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

As the awareness of the dangers of unused and expired medicines increases, many are searching for the best and convenient way to get rid of their unwanted medicines from home. The Center on Aging in Maine has developed and is operating a state-wide direct drug mail-back system, one of the most unique programs in the nation through a partnership with the U.S. Postal Service, Maine Drug Enforcement Administration, and the State of Maine. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency funded part of this pilot study through its Aging Initiative which targets seniors to change their behavior with disposing unwanted medicines. The drug mailing kits are free and available at participating pharmacies.

The study began in 2008 with Phase I which limited the drug mail-back service only to seniors. Phase II of the study later expanded the service to other age groups in Maine. Information on each returned medicine was recorded by volunteers and sent to Community Medical Foundation for coding and entering into the National Unused and Expired Medicines Registry, the only one of its kind in the nation.

Data abstraction from the Registry limited to only senior participants in Phase I was the method used in the exploratory study on non-adherence to medical treatment among senior patients and consumers. “If seniors are throwing away their medicines, they are not using them as prescribed by their doctors. This behavior is a serious patient safety concern when the patient is not getting the therapeutic benefits from

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the medicine, “according to Elizabeth Smith, Founder of Community Medical Foundation and co-author of the Special Report to CMS. Even more revealing is the cost. Among 800 participating seniors, the total cost of wasted medicines that were mailed back for disposal was estimated at \$83,180, based on average wholesale price. With market mark up, this cost may range between \$108,134 and \$133,088. When both prescription and over-the-counter medicines were combined, the proportion of waste increased to 52%.

By the year 2050, 21% or 86.7 Americans will be 65 or older. Some senior reportedly take as many as 15 medicines daily. Prescription medicine accounts for about 10% of the national healthcare budget. It would be wise to further study non-adherence among senior patients and try to reduce the rate of non-adherence. If doctors are over-prescribing medicines to seniors, more supervision and better monitoring of the prescription would be required. If patients refuse to take medicines as directed, improved communication and trust with the caregivers along with more education and reminders may help lower the amount and cost of wasted medicines. Excess medicines at home can cause medication error, accidental poisoning and misuse or abuse of the medicines. Often, seniors are targeted for larceny, home invasion, and physical assault not for money but for prescription medicines, according to one local Drug Enforcement Administration officer.

The Special Report to CMS based on the study of non-adherence among seniors is a landmark publication to call attention to one important area of the healthcare system in need of immediate review and reform. The Report will be publicly announced and presented at the 2010 International Symposium on Safe Medicine, Portland, Maine October 10-12, 2010. Copies of the Report can be obtained from the Center on Aging or Community Medical Foundation for Patient Safety.

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About Community Medical Foundation for Patient Safety



Community Medical Foundation for Patient Safety, established in December 2003 as a nonprofit 501 (c)(3) tax-exempt, active learning organization based in the Houston area, is a leader in patient safety research and education. Our mission is to *promote and support patient safety through research, education, and the demonstrated practice of patient-centered health care*. On behalf of the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality has recognized and listed Community Medical Foundation for Patient Safety as Patient Safety Organization #29.
