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Safe Use of Acetaminophen

Customized NCPIE campaign targets teen influencers, collegians, older adults & caregivers

(Rockville, MD) -- The National Council on Patient Information and Education (NCPIE) today launched three customized, online educational modules to promote safe use of acetaminophen products. The most common drug ingredient in America, acetaminophen, is found in more than 600 different prescription and over-the-counter medicines, including pain relievers, fever reducers, and sleep aids as well as cough, cold, and allergy medicines. When used as directed, acetaminophen is safe and effective. But there is a limit to how much can be safely used in one day; overdoses can potentially lead to liver damage.

To help raise awareness about acetaminophen safety by distinct populations who use it, NCPIE's modules integrate tailored messaging, free downloads, and useful links to external resources on the safe use of products that contain acetaminophen. Individual online modules – described below – can be used for self education, or as resources for community outreach and education.

“Unfortunately, it’s easy to overlook common medicine precautions,” noted NCPIE Chair N. Lee Rucker, M.S.P.H. “With many people using more prescription medicines than ever before, as well as our abundance of choices for self-treatment, everyone needs to make a conscious effort to read the labels; and ask questions of pharmacists, doctors, nurses and other prescribers. For 30 years, NCPIE has been working to enhance that vital patient-clinician communication about safe medicine use. These new modules about safe use of acetaminophen are tailored for various medicine users, across the age spectrum.” Rucker added, “As we age, our learning preferences and lifestyles change; so too does technology. NCPIE has interwoven all of these elements into these new communication platforms to promote safe, appropriate medicine use.”

About NCPIE’s Acetaminophen Safe Use Modules

- Module # 1 -- **Acetaminophen Safe Use for Teen Influencers** provides teen influencers -- parents, grandparents, teachers, coaches, community and school-based healthcare providers and others with basic tools and information about using acetaminophen safely. The module can be used as a stand-alone program or can be combined with a second, comprehensive NCPIE program, **Maximizing Your Role as a Teen Influencer: What You can Do to Help Prevent Teen Prescription Drug Abuse**. Specifics include teaching teens to:
 - Always read the label to learn about the active ingredients in a medicine before taking it.
 - Ask a parent or guardian to examine the medicines in the medicine cabinet at home and to use a color marker to highlight acetaminophen as the active ingredient to make it easily identifiable if it is not already highlighted on medicine packaging.
 - Never take more than one medicine at a time that contains acetaminophen.
 - Never take more than the recommended dose of acetaminophen or take it for longer than directed on the label, unless directed by a healthcare professional to do so.

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- Module # 2 -- **Acetaminophen Safe Use College Resource Guide** can be used as a stand-alone or in conjunction with NCPIE's existing Taking Action to Prevent & Address Prescription Drug Abuse: A Resource Kit for America's College Campuses. Downloadable handouts in the resource guide are designed to equip campus leaders – residence assistants, peer health educators, campus leaders in student government, Greek life or campus clubs, and captains or coaches of athletic teams among others -- with timely and practical resources and programming ideas to help ensure that college students become “Acetaminophen-Savvy” so they:
 - Know the facts about safe use of medicines that contain acetaminophen.
 - Understand the consequences of potential overdose.
 - Learn about the importance of reading and following dosing directions on the Drug Facts OTC label.

- Module # 3 -- **Acetaminophen Safe Use for Seniors** is an online educational module targeting older adults, caregivers and healthcare professionals for self-education and to present the information in their communities (i.e., senior centers, places of worship, libraries, pharmacies, or doctor's offices). Content was developed with input from a project advisory team with expertise in senior advocacy, outreach, health communications, and safe use of medicines for older adults. The module can be used as a stand-alone program or can be combined with NCPIE's program **Medication Use Safety Training (MUST) for Seniors™**. Core messages, such as questions to ask your healthcare professional, include:
 - Do any of my medicines contain acetaminophen?
 - How much acetaminophen can I safely take?
 - How long can I use acetaminophen safely?
 - Does acetaminophen interact with any medication I currently take?

For more information, go to www.talkaboutrx.org/acetaminophen/overview.jsp.

These programs were developed by NCPIE with support from McNeil Consumer Healthcare Division of McNeil-PPC, Inc.

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About the National Council on Patient Information and Education (NCPIE) - Founded in 1982, NCPIE is a non-profit coalition of organizations representing consumer and patient groups, voluntary health organizations, healthcare professionals, government agencies, and pharmaceutical manufacturers. NCPIE's mission is to stimulate and improve communication of information on safe and appropriate use of medicines to consumers and health care professionals. NCPIE develops programs, provides educational resources, and offers services to advance the common mission of its members. See: www.talkaboutrx.org.

NCPIE is an organizational partner in the Acetaminophen Awareness Coalition (AAC) **Know Your Dose** campaign. The goal of **Know Your Dose** is to educate consumers and patients on how to use medicines containing acetaminophen appropriately and to help change behaviors that could lead to an unintentional acetaminophen overdose. For more information, go to: www.knowyourdose.org.