



Shareholders Challenge Pharmaceutical Industry To Take Back Unused Drugs

Oakland, CA – April 20, 2016 – Citing the lack of free, accessible programs for disposal of consumer prescription drugs in contributing to the U.S. painkiller abuse epidemic, 23 shareholder groups with more than \$50 billion in assets under management have asked 10 of the largest pharmaceutical companies to develop policies on industry responsibility for take back of unused and expired prescription drugs.

The lack of convenient programs for proper disposal of prescription drugs and accessories such as needles and syringes contributes to water pollution, illicit drug use, drug addiction, and threats to sanitation workers. Drug overdose now is the leading [cause](#) of accidental death in the U.S. Overdoses from prescription pain medications killed more than 16,000 Americans in 2013. President Barack Obama has [stated](#) that most young people who begin misusing prescription drugs get them from the family medicine cabinet.

“Shareholders are concerned that the U.S. pharmaceutical industry does not have a policy or plan for collection and processing of expired and unused prescription medications,” said Conrad MacKerron, Senior Vice President at As You Sow, which organized the corporate engagement effort.

The Drug Enforcement Administration has organized periodic National Take-Back Days for medicines, and collected more than 5 million pounds of medications with just 10 events. Clearly far more convenient and ongoing collection services are needed. The Obama Administration’s National Drug Control Strategy report calls for establishment of long-term, sustainable disposal programs in communities.

As least one company has taken action. In February Walgreens, the largest U.S. pharmacy chain, [announced](#) it will install drug disposal kiosks in 500 drugstores in 39 states and Washington, D.C. as part of a broader effort to counter drug abuse. Unfortunately, this represents just 1% of all pharmacies.

“Shareholders expect companies that put drugs on the market with the potential for abuse to develop policies and practices to provide easy access for convenient disposal of unused drugs at the community level to keep them out of harm’s way,” said Cathy Rowan, Director of Socially Responsible Investments for Trinity Health, a national, not-for-profit Catholic health system operating in 21 states.

Shareholders sent [letters](#) to AbbVie Inc., Becton Dickinson & Co., GlaxoSmithKline, Roche Holding AG, Johnson & Johnson, Merck & Co., Novartis International AG, Novo Nordisk, Pfizer Inc., and Sanofi S.A. In addition, As You Sow has filed shareholder resolutions with [AbbVie](#), [Johnson & Johnson](#) and [Merck & Co.](#), asking for policies clarifying their positions on responsibility for take back programs.

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As You Sow is a nonprofit organization that promotes environmental and social corporate responsibility through shareholder advocacy, coalition building, and innovative legal strategies. For more information visit www.asyousow.org.