

## Wisconsin

### **Wisconsin Old Medicines Mail Back Pilot - Final Report to U.S. EPA GLNPO February 2009**

The primary purpose of the Wisconsin Old Medicines Mail Back Pilot was to establish an efficient collection system for pharmaceutical waste from consumers. Below is a summary of the goals, outcomes, and benefits achieved during the project.

**Objective One:** to conduct a six-month pilot mail back program utilizing Capital Returns reverse distribution infrastructure.

Implementation of the pilot mail back program began on May 9, 2008. With the cooperation of the target counties of Winnebago and Waukesha, an aggressive outreach and public relations effort was launched. This included:

- utilization of Capital Returns' public-relations' firm to garner both national and statewide publicity through newspapers and radio;
- distribution of posters and handouts to over 100 pharmacies in the target area;
- establishment of a pilot subcommittee to assist in outreach efforts; and
- publication of newsletter articles and wastewater treatment inserts, announcing the availability of the program.

As part of this effort, Capital Returns trained call-center staff in the protocol for handling consumer medicines. At 800 number was established, which provided easy access for consumers to obtain instructions on how to package their old medicines, as well as which materials were acceptable. Only non-controlled medicines were accepted during this pilot due to lack of the United States Department of Justice Drug Enforcement Agency approval. Results include:

- A total of 1730 households returned medicines through the project period. A few hundred additional informational calls were received as well.
- A wide variety of materials have been sent in, with maintenance prescription medicines being the primary product.
- Eighty percent of program participants resided in Waukesha County.

Due to the development of an efficient call in system, the UW-Extension and Capital Returns were able to extend the period of this pilot until December 31, 2008.

**Objective Two:** to design and print handouts for use by community household hazardous waste programs and pharmacies on best management practices for old medicines.

As mentioned above, a poster was developed by the UW Extension Environmental Resources Center informing consumers of the new program. In addition, 3" x 5" handouts were developed, which were easy to distribute by pharmacists.

Poster distribution included the direct mailing of posters by the UW Extension to the smaller pharmacies, and distribution by Capital Returns to the larger pharmacy chains through the regional district managers. In addition Winnebago County nursing staff distributed posters to

community organizations, senior centers, etc. Finally, Waukesha County worked with wastewater treatment operators to include a tag line about the program as part of the quarterly bill.

**Objective three:** to record types and quantities of waste generated and cost for management of old medicines generated in the pilot program.

Capital Returns invoiced UW-Extension for \$20,000 in total program costs for the period through 2008. Due to the nature of the program and good will provision of in-kind services, specific costs were estimated to include:

- 70% of the costs were associated with materials packaging, shipping to and from the consumer, processing and incineration.
- 20% of the costs were for the operation of the call center and 800 service, and
- 10% of the costs were related to administrative components of the program.

In addition, the City of Brookfield was invoiced for an additional \$10,000 to cover the above expenses. Finally, UW-Extension incurred a cost of \$900 for printing and distribution of posters and pharmacy inserts.

A total of 15,164 items were returned during the project period, with 81% of the materials generated by Waukesha County residents.

**Objective four:** to evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot program, as well as awareness of key issues with pharmaceutical waste.

The UW River Falls Survey Research Center is currently implementing a comprehensive evaluation of this project, which will be completed in March 2009. This effort includes conducting two parallel surveys: one of randomly selected program participants in the program and the second, a random sample of the general public in the two counties.

In summary, the Wisconsin Old Medicines Mail Back Pilot has presented a number of challenges and opportunities. It has clearly demonstrated that the mail back model is a workable solution for old medicines and that it can serve as a national model. Key strengths of the program have included the involvement of a wide spectrum of stakeholders, the cooperation of numerous pharmacies, a steady call-in rate of participation, and a good rate of return of old medicines. Challenges encountered in implementing this project have included maintaining pharmacy participation throughout the project period and a low level of participation by the residents of Winnebago County. The follow-up evaluation will provide additional information regarding these challenges.

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