

The Daily Californian

[Group Looks to Change How Patients Dispose of Medicines](#)

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Thursday, July 19, 2007

A local nonprofit organization aimed at increasing environmental awareness in the medical field has launched a new program encouraging people to dispose of unused and expired drugs at designated drop sites instead of simply throwing them out.

The Teleosis Institute, opened in 2004, is installing drop bins at its center and pharmacies around the city in its latest campaign to reduce the effects of medicines on the environment.

“We want to encourage people to dispose of their expired and unused medicines the right way, by taking them to our take-back sites,” said Joel Kreisberg, the institute’s founder and executive director. “If you dump your medicine down the toilet or just put them in the trash, they will eventually get into the water and potentially harm aquatic life as well as people.”

The institute has already installed two take-back centers, one at its office on Fifth Street and the second at the Pharmaca Integrative Pharmacy on Solano Avenue. Kreisberg added that there are plans to set up 10 more sites as the project develops.

Once discarded drugs are picked up by the institute, they are incinerated, a process that Kreisberg said is more environmentally friendly than dropping them in landfills or flushing them down the toilet.

In addition to installing the take-back sites, the institute is also pushing for individuals to buy smaller quantities of medication in order to avoid ending up with excess that could pollute the environment, Kreisberg said.

Pharmaca representatives said they are glad to have a drop site at their pharmacy, but added that even before working with the institute, they already had unwanted or excess drugs incinerated 13 times a year.

“The Teleosis Institute is providing a great service to our customers and we really hope that they use it,” said Christopher Turf, the director of compounding and medical outreach for the pharmacy. “It is really important that all medicines are properly disposed of so that we can avoid polluting and harming the environment.”

The movement to reduce improper disposal of drugs, called the Green Pharmacy Campaign, is one of a number of programs designed to help make the health care industry environmentally sustainable, Kreisberg said.

The institute also runs the Green Health Care Campaign, which Kreisberg said is an educational program for health care professionals designed to inform them to increase the environmental sustainability of their practice.

While the institute does not offer any incentives to health professionals for attending their educational programs, Kreisberg said they find that many environmentally conscious professionals are eager to learn how to make their practices more green.

“A lot of the doctors who attend our program are environmentally friendly in their personal life, and they are happy to find an opportunity to become more environmentally friendly in their professional lives,” Kreisberg said. “Unfortunately, there aren’t many programs to help health professionals become environmentally sustainable.”

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