

SAFE Glen Cove Coalition Recognizes 27th National Medicine Abuse Awareness Month

October is National Medicine Abuse Awareness Month, founded and supported by Community Anti Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA), an international membership organization representing more than 5,000 community anti-drug coalitions in the United States and abroad. Locally, the Glen Cove SAFE Coalition is trying to spread the word to help prevent abuse of medicine.

According to CADCA, one in 25 youth ages 12 through 17 has abused cough medicine to get high from its dextromethorphan (DXM) ingredient, and one in five young adults has abused a prescription drug. National Medicine Abuse Awareness Month seeks to raise awareness of the dangers of prescription (Rx) drug abuse and over-the-counter (OTC) cough medicine abuse.

The cough suppressant and opioid derivative is used in more than 100 over-the-counter medicines. It is safe for ingestion and not habit-forming when taken as directed; however, illicit and excessive use of DXM has recently risen, and this type of use has negative effects. While not physically addictive when taken in recommended doses, DXM has the potential to be addictive if taken in large doses or

administered via an alternate method (such as snorting or injecting).

Additionally, a user may also begin to obsessively crave using the drug between bouts of compulsive use or repeated intake of large amounts. DXM appeals to teens due to the ease of access and low cost. In fact, 10 percent of teenagers have abused cough medicines (many which contain Dextromethorphan) to get a high.

"You can prevent dextromethorphan abuse by talking to your teens and younger children about the physical and mental health risks of DXM abuse; reinforce to your teen that the fact that a drug is prescription does not mean that is not dangerous or addictive; set clear rules that your child must not take medicine without your knowledge; keep medicines away from the reach of teens and young children and pay attention to medicine quantities and watch for significant changes," said Dr. Sharon Harris, executive director of SAFE. "Discussing the negative effects of dextromethorphan abuse (and drug abuse in general) is one of the best ways to prevent teen drug abuse."

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The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) maintains that prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) drugs are, after marijuana (and alcohol), the most commonly abused substances by Americans 14 and older. Some medications have psychoactive (mind-altering) properties and, because of that, are sometimes abused—that is, taken for reasons or in ways or amounts not intended by a doctor, or taken by someone other than the person for whom they are prescribed.

People often think that prescription and OTC drugs are safer than illicit drugs. But they can be as addictive and dangerous and put users at risk for other adverse health effects, including overdose—especially when taken along with other drugs or alcohol.

Before prescribing drugs, a health

care provider considers a patient's health conditions, current and prior drug use, and other medicines to assess the risks and benefits for a patient.

The Community Committee of the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition serves as a think tank to examine community needs assessment data, implement alcohol and substance abuse awareness campaigns, educate the public regarding ongoing and emerging alcohol and substance abuse trends and pursue viable funding streams to address gaps in community services.

According to a community survey of 1,408 Glen Cove residents conducted by the Coalition in 2016, prescription drug use was an area of concern.

SAFE Inc. is the only alcohol and substance use prevention agency in Glen Cove dedicated to the elimination of alcohol and substance abuse in the community. The agency, through the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition, continues to work to change societal norms about alcohol and substance abuse through year round prevention, intervention and education activities and events.

For more information about SAFE and its community based Coalition programs and initiatives contact SAFE at: 516-676-2008 or visit www.safeglencove.org.