What causes MORE DEATHS than motor vehicle accidents in Santa Clara County?

It Could Be in Your Medicine Cabinet

INSIDE:

- The problem of prescription drugs
- How they affect our health, safety and water quality
- What YOU can do about it

A Danger That Affects Us All

Examining the problem of leftover medications

BY KATE GONZALES

my Cooper knew her son, Jon Gottlieb, as a caring young man who loved life and had a promising future. The 26-yearold college graduate ran a Silicon Valley startup, had a nice girlfriend and a new puppy. Cooper was shocked when Jon was found dead in his San Jose apartment in July 2014. Her son had overdosed on oxycodone, hydrocodone and alcohol.

"We thought his life was going so well," Cooper says. "I'm trying to somehow come to terms with the fact that it really

Cooper worries about education around prescription medications and that there are too few ways to safely dispose of them. It's a problem she's encountered a couple times since her son's death — once when she found a stockpile of unused drugs in her late mother's medicine cabinet and again when she found a bottle of painkillers leftover from her stepson's surgery.

"Even though he lost his brother to prescription drugs and he had some he wasn't taking, he didn't know what to do with them,"

There is a health and safety epidemic happening in Santa Clara County right now, and it starts in each and every one of our homes. There are enough opioid prescriptions in the county to cover four out of every 10 residents. These substances killed 195 Santa Clara residents between 2009 and 2013 and caused 567 non-fatal emergency room visits during the same time period, according to data from the California Department of Public Health. Stockpiling these drugs in our homes is fueling crime and improperly disposing them is harming our environment.

When these pharmaceuticals are left in the home, children may take them accidentally, or bring them to "skittle parties,"

where teens share and consume miscellaneous pills. Whether consumed intentionally or by accident, the risk of poisoning is

The improper disposal of unused medicine also threatens our water. Rob D'Arcy, former Hazardous Materials Division Manager for Santa Clara County Recycling and Waste Reduction Division, says it's important to keep pharmaceuticals out of landfills, because once medicine enters the leachate in landfills, it's impossible to remove at wastewater treatment plants.

"It's then returned right back to a water body, to our rivers and the San Francisco Bay," he explains.

While there have been few studies on harmful effects to humans, some research suggests the chemicals can impact aquatic life by causing changes to animals' hormones, says Sarah Young, Senior Project Manager at Santa Clara Valley Water District.

People have come to understand they shouldn't throw pharmaceuticals in the garbage. But if a community lacks convenient drop-off locations, medicines often accumulate in peoples' homes, putting the owner at risk for robbery.

"It's a target-rich environment for somebody who may be interested in abusing them" or selling them to support another drug addiction, says Capt. Jeffrey Plecque, Sunnyvale Department of Public Safety.

One life lost to prescription drug overdose is one too many. Cooper now dedicates herself full-time to raising awareness around this issue with the National Coalition Against Prescription Drug Abuse and other organizations. She will continue to advocate for prescription drug awareness and safe disposal options.

"Jon's not here to share his voice," Cooper says, "so I have to."



A LOOK AT THE PROBLEM IN SANTA CLARA COUNTY



DRUG DEATHS

Between 2009 and 2013, there were 195 deaths

related to opioid medications in Santa Clara County 1



IMPACTING WATER QUALITY

"There's a chemical soup out there."

- Karin North, Watershed Protection Manager for the City of Palo Alto



POISONINGS

Between 2009 and 2013. Santa Clara County had

567 emergency department visits

related to all opioids that were non-fatal²



CRIME

"People fuel their own addictions by marketing stolen pharmaceuticals."

- Capt. Jeffrey Plecque, Sunnyvale Department of Public Safety



COST

Estimated prescription drug sales per year in Santa Clara County: 3

\$1.4 billion

Cost to run a take-back program: 4

\$1.4 million

1 California Department of Public Health, Vital Statistics Death Statistics Death Statistics Death Statistics Death Multiple Cause of Death files 2 California Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development, Emergency Department Data. 3 Sales based on 2014 statewide sales figures from the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, adjusted for Santa Clara County population. "Costs based on pharmaceutical manufacturers" estimated expense to run a program in Alameda County, adjusted for Santa Clara County's population

Creating a Solution

Starting in July 2016, Santa Clara County's Safe Drug Disposal Ordinance will give residents more options to get rid of meds

BY KATE GONZALES

ou don't trash them, and you don't flush them. So what is the best way for Santa Clara County residents to get rid of their expired or unwanted medications? The safe and legal way to dispose of medications is to take them to a designated drop-off center.

Starting in July 2016, there will be more convenient locations to drop off expired or unwanted medications in Santa Clara County thanks to a new local law. Because there is no state or federal legislation that establishes pharmaceutical take-

back programs, some local governments have taken up the issue at the city and county level. The Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors recognized that the current number of drop-off sites could not adequately meet the needs of the county's 1.86 million residents. Following the lead of neighboring Alameda and San Mateo counties, the board passed the Safe Drug Disposal Ordinance in June 2015.

The ordinance requires pharmaceutical manufacturers to fund and establish a greater number of drop-off sites in the county.

"There must be at least one collection location for every 20,000 residents," says Rob D'Arcy, former Hazardous Materials Division Manager for Santa Clara County Recy-

cling and Waste Reduction Division, who played a key role in developing the county's take-back program. That calculates to roughly 100 collection locations throughout the county.

The ordinance is based on the concept of extended producer responsibility — which makes manufacturers of products responsible for their disposal. The manufacturers

must fund drop-off sites, based on similar programs which cost them a tiny amount compared to the millions of dollars in profits made each year in Santa Clara County.

"These companies that profit from these products should be responsible for their end-of-life management," D'Arcy says. "They need to have that level of responsibility."

Many community agencies and partners are collaborating toward getting more collection bins in Santa Clara County. The effort has received a boost thanks to a grant program

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Rob D'arcy

Former Hazardous Materials Division Manager for

Santa Clara County Recycling and Waste

Reduction Program

at the Santa Clara Valley Water District, which has awarded \$200,000 to fund the initial installation of 50 drug collection bins by

> The water district is particularly concerned about this issue because pharmaceutical compounds are making their way into local waterways, affecting water quality and wildlife, says Santa Clara Valley Water District Chair Barbara Keegan.

"One of the program's top priorities is to reduce toxins, hazards and contaminants in our local waterways," she says.

The grant program is funded by the voter-approved Safe, Clean Water and Natural

Flood Protection Program. Through collaboration with local law enforcement agencies and local partners, such as Google and San Jose State, 12 bins have been installed so far using the grant funding.

"The water district's funding provides a catalyst for pharmacies to get an early start before the county's ordinance takes effect [in July 2016]," Keegan says. "Together with the local ordinance, public outreach projects, and responsible source control, we are optimistic that the amount of pharmaceuticals entering our waterways will be reduced."



Chair, Santa Clara Valley Water Dist

WHAT IS EXTENDED PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY?

It's in everyone's best interest to reduce waste. Paint, batteries, medications and other common household hazardous waste items require special management and handling. Local governments and even some manufacturers have created specialized disposal procedures for such waste streams.

Who foots the bill for government-run disposal? Currently, you do, via your garbage bill or taxes.

Founded in 2007, the California Product Stewardship Council is a public benefit nonprofit that educates and advocates to shift California's product waste management system from one focused on government-funded and ratepayer-financed waste diversion to one that relies on producer responsibility in order to reduce public costs and drive improvements in product design that

promote environmental sustainability.

"THE **PRODUCERS HAVE** A SHARE OF THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE LIFE CYCLE OF THEIR

"It is extending the responsibility for products beyond the sale," says CPSC **Executive Director Heidi Sanborn.** "The producers have a share of the responsibility for the life cycle of their products. Twenty years from now our hope is that nothing goes into market that has no end-of-life management program in place."

- Anne Stokes



The Power Is in **Your Hands**

As you can see on the map below, the places consumers pick up prescriptions far outnumber the places where they can safely dispose of them. But Santa Clara County residents have the power to bring greater balance.

People already go to pharmacies for their medicinal needs, so wouldn't it make sense to return medicine there as well? Residents can choose to visit pharmacies hosting

take-back bins as a way to support these responsible businesses in our community.

"(People) can use their purchasing power to bring their business to a pharmacy that is helping with a community solution by volunteering as a collection location," says Rob D'Arcy, former Hazardous Materials Division Manager, Santa Clara County Recycling and Waste Reduction Division.

SANTA CLARA COUNTY TAKE BACK BINS MAP

PHARMACIES AND BUSINESSES WHERE MEDICATIONS CAN BE PURCHASED

PHARMACIES AND BUSINESSES WITH **DESIGNATED TAKE BACK BINS**

(PEOPLE) **CAN USE THEIR PURCHASING POWER** TO BRING THEIR BUSINESS TO A PHARMACY THAT IS ... **VOLUNTEERING AS A COLLECTION** LOCATION."

Rob D'Arcy Former Hazardous Materials Division Manage Canta Clara County Recycling and Wa

SANTA CLARA MORGAN HILL

SAN FRANCISCO BAY

Visit sccsafemeds.org for the latest list of take-back locations



"THERE'S AN

OPPORTUNITY FOR

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WHETHER IT'S AT THE COUNTY

LEVEL OR AT THE STATE LEVEL,

TO GET IT RIGHT FROM A

REGULATORY PERSPECTIVE.

Taking Responsibility

What we can learn from our neighbors to the north and south

BY ANNE STOKES

hile Californians have local government-funded drug disposal programs, Canada and Mexico have implemented successful national plans where producers design and manage the program. These extended producer responsibility (EPR) policies reduce taxpayer costs while providing for communities' health and well-being.

In several Canadian provinces, pharmacies have long offered free take-back services of unused prescription drugs. Lawmakers went a step further in 2012, enacting Ontario Regulation 298/12, which refocused end-of-life product management on pharmaceutical producers rather than retail pharmacies. The result was a threefold increase in the number of take-back collection sites and better accessibility for consumers.

"There's an opportunity for jurisdictions in the U.S., whether it's at the county level or at the state level, to get it right from a regulatory perspective," says Brad Wright, principal consultant for Environment and Resources Consulting in Toronto. "What they really

should do is look to the excellent example here in Canada – in B.C., Manitoba and Ontario – of how these programs have been operating for years, and operating very effectively, meeting targets in getting this material managed properly."

Mexico has also taken a successful EPR policy route. Since its creation in 2007, the nonprofit National Management System and

Drug Packaging Waste organization has worked to extend coverage nationwide. According to SINGREM (a Spanish acronym for the nonprofit), there are 4,400 containers in 26 states. In 2015, the sites accumulated 526 tons of unwanted medications.

"Manufacturers, pharmacies and consumers are increasingly more aware of the significance of leftover medications," says Jose Antonio Aedo, general manager of SINGREM.

> "Moreover, with containers in the large pharmacy chains, it's easy to find a place to drop off those expired or leftover products."

Here in the U.S., however, the pharmaceutical industry has been less than enthusiastic about picking up the tab for the collection and destruction of their products. In 2012, Alameda County's Safe Drug Disposal Ordinance, which holds pharmaceutical companies responsible for their products' end-of-life management, was passed. Then in 2013, King County, Wash., passed its EPR ordinance. Both were legally challenged by the

pharmaceutical industry association, PhRMA, which

lost its cases in lower courts. PhRMA went on to appeal those decisions to the U.S. Supreme Court, which denied the case in May 2015.

In 2015 alone, five California counties (San Francisco, Marin, Santa Cruz, San Mateo and Santa Clara) enacted EPR ordinances. Los Angeles, Santa Barbara and Cook County, Illinois, may soon join them, as these counties have ordinances in draft form.



A TARGET FOR CRIME

Easy accessibility and thriving street market values make prescription drug abuse a rising concern for both law enforcement and families alike. According to Capt. Jeffery Plecque of the Sunnyvale Department of Public Safety, having unused and unsecured medications can make your home a target for someone with illicit intentions.

"I ENCOURAGE **EVERYBODY TO TAKE** ADVANTAGE OF LAWFUL DISPOSAL LOCATIONS AND **MEASURES TO MAKE SURE** THEY DON'T FALL INTO THE WRONG HANDS."

"People fuel their own addictions by marketing stolen pharmaceuticals," he says. "Whether the person is using the medications for themselves or selling them on the street for profit, it's all interrelated."

According to Plecque, some medications can have a street value of \$20 for a single pill, making them a prime target for theft. Oftentimes seniors are targeted because burglars know their homes usually have painkillers inside. But while elderly people are common targets, burglars are not always strangers.

"We've had instances where family members were stealing from their grandparents to access those types of pain medications and using them for recreational use," Plecque says. "I have personal knowledge of a number of instances where the illegal diversion of those drugs has led to an addiction, and those addictions are lifelong. whether the person gets treatment or not."

Having convenient prescription drug disposal options, especially at sites such as pharmacies, hospitals and public safety departments where security measures are already in place, would help prevent the diversion of pharmaceuticals.

"There are some inherent dangers to the storage of pharmaceuticals," Plecque says. "I encourage everybody to take advantage of lawful disposal locations and measures to make sure they don't fall into the wrong hands."

- Anne Stokes

Walgreens is launching 500 pick up express R safe medication disposal kiosks, seen here, into stores across the country, including California. PHOTO COLIRTESY OF WALGREENS

Making the Right Choice

BY MICHELLE CARL

CHAMPION EVERYONE'S

RIGHT TO BE HAPPY AND

HEALTHY, AND THIS IS JUST

LIVING OUT OUR MISSION."

Phil Caruso

Spokesman for Walgreens

hen getting rid of something, people want disposal to be convenient and free. Otherwise, they aren't going to do it. Product stewardship experts know this, and it's one of the reasons they advocate for prescription medicines to be disposed of in the same place they are obtained — the local pharmacy.

"All 10 Santa Clara County Valley Medical Center outpatient pharmacies already host safe medication disposal bins and we are urging others to get on board as well," says Khanh Pham, Santa Clara County Public Health Pharmacist. "OUR PURPOSE IS TO

While some pharmacies are hesitant to host disposal bins until California State Board of Pharmacy guidelines are finalized, other pharmacies are taking a giant step forward in safely removing of unwanted medications from the home. In February 2016, Walgreens announced that it would install safe medication disposal kiosks in 500 stores across 39 states, including California.

"The fact of the matter is that drug abuse continues to be an ongoing health and public safety risk in our country," says Phil Caruso, a Walgreens spokesman. "It really gets back to our purpose: Our purpose is to champion everyone's right to be happy and healthy, and this is just living out our mission."

Although it's too early to know which stores in California will be hosting kiosks, Caruso says Walgreens is looking at 24-hour locations. Once installed, individuals will have the opportunity to dispose of unwanted, unused or expired prescription drugs, including controlled substances, as well as over-the-counter medications. This

service is available for everyone, no matter where the medication was purchased, at no cost.

"We just want people to clean up their medicine cabinets," Caruso says. "We don't care where you got it from, we just want you to get rid of it safely."

The goal is to reduce the risk of abuse by removing medications from the home medicine cabinet. According to

> Administration Report from 2013, nearly 70 percent of people misusing prescription pain relievers report getting them from a friend or relative the last time they misused these drugs. But Caruso points to some other benefits, including keeping meds out of landfills and the water supply.

the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services

The move has drawn praise from the California Product Stewardship Council, which is leading an effort to get drug manufacturers to be responsible for the safe disposal of their products.

"I applaud Walgreens for being a leader of the retail chains in the United States as the first to launch a safe medication take-back program

for the public," says Heidi Sanborn, Executive Director of the California Product Stewardship Council. "With Walgreens taking this bold step, I am confident that together we can put a stop to unused medications being flushed into our waterways and greatly reduce access to those who would abuse medications. We encourage the public to thank Walgreens by voting with your dollars and bringing your business to stores that offer this wonderful public service."



PROBLEM."

treatment plants do a good job of removing biological waste, facilities are not designed to remove synthetic chemicals such as

While wastewater

"They're coming in their concentrated state to us," she says. "Most of these chemicals are synthetic organic chemicals created by chemists, and they don't break down."

pharmaceuticals.

DON'T RUSH TO FLUSH

Flushing medication down the toilet is NEVER a good idea. Although historically people were advised to dispose of medications this way, the current body of evidence suggests these chemicals could cause harm to

"You're not getting rid of it," says the City of Palo Alto's Watershed Protection Manager Karin North. "You're getting it out of your house and your home,

but you're not disposing of it properly. Flushing it down

the toilet or putting it in the trash doesn't actually help solve the

problem."

This means that the Bay Area watershed is inundated with a toxic cocktail of chemicals that has been shown to harm aquatic organisms at even miniscule concentrations.

"There are some research studies that show that [small] concentrations, parts per trillion, cause harm," North says. "The challenge that we have is that there are thousands of chemicals out there, and it's persistent, since they're being discharged 24 hours a day, seven days a week."

The California Product Stewardship Council developed the "Don't Rush to Flush, Meds in the Bin We All Win" campaign to help encourage the proper disposal of medications. A current list of take-back locations can be found at www.DontRushToFlush.org.

- Anne Stokes





Pharmacies, including Walgreens, are becoming part of the solution

Three Ways to Take Action

BY ANNE STOKES

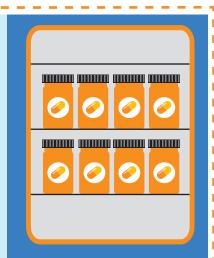
Reduce the need

- Talk to your health care provider about pain management and whether your medication has a high risk for abuse.
- Ask about alternatives to painkillers, such as acupuncture, relaxation or over-thecounter pain relievers.
- Only fill a prescription if you think you'll need it, or fill half and return for the rest later, if needed.



Store safely

- Keep medicines out of sight and reach of children and pets.
- **Educate your family and caregivers** about proper dosage and safe storage.
- Lock up medications that can be abused in a cabinet, drawer or medicine safe.
- Keep an updated inventory of all prescription medicine in your home.
- Keep track of pill quantities.



Properly dispose







CHECK TO SEE IF YOUR ITEMS ARE ACCEPTED

Accepted:

- Over-the-counter and prescription medications, including controlled substances (see page 8 for which sites collect controlled substances)
- Medicated ointments, lotions and creams
- Liquid medication
- Pet medication

Not Accepted:

- Sharps/needles
- IV bags
- Waste containing blood or infectious material
- Personal care products
- **Empty pill containers**
- Hydrogen peroxide
- Aerosol cans
- Illicit drugs

PREP YOUR MEDS

- Dump unneeded pills into plastic baggies.
- Peel off or black out the labels on pill containers and recycle the containers at home.
- Keep liquids, creams and gels in original packaging.

DROP OFF MEDS!

Approved Santa Clara County drop-off locations are listed on page 8 and constantly updated at sccsafemeds.org.

Don't flush or throw medications in the trash. Proper disposal is safer for our community and the environment.

sccsafemeds.org



More Disposal Options Means Safer Communities



REDUCE THE DEMAND

Find pain management alternatives and only use painkillers when necessary.



USE YOUR SPENDING POWER

Support businesses that host safe disposal bins.



PROPER DISPOSAL

Stop pharmaceuticals from getting into our landfills, water or the wrong hands by properly storing and disposing them.



MEDICATION DROP-OFF LOCATIONS

★ locations that also accept controlled substances

Cupertino

★ West Valley Patrol Sub-Station 1601 S. De Anza Blvd. 408-868-6600 Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Gilro

- ★ Gilroy Police Department 7301 Hanna Street 408-846-0300 Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.—5 p.m.
- ★ Valley Health Center at Gilroy Pharmacy 7475 Camino Arroyo 408-852-2212 Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Los Altos

Los Altos Senior Center 97 Hillview Avenue 650-947-2797 Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Milpitas

★ Valley Health Center at Milpitas Pharmacy 143 N. Main St. 408-957-0919 Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Morgan Hill

★ Morgan Hill Police Department 16200 Vineyard Blvd. 408-776-7300

Mountain View

★ Mountain View Police Department 1000 Villa St. 650-903-6344 Daily, 7 a.m.—7 p.m. Palo Alto Medical Foundation Mountain View Center Pharmacy 701 East El Camino Real 650-934-7699 Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-7 p.m. Saturday, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

Palo Alto

→ Palo Alto Police Department 275 Forest Ave. 650-329-2122 Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.

> Palo Alto Medical Foundation Pharmacy 795 El Camino Real 650-853-6066 Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-6:30 p.m.; Saturday, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

Palo Alto Regional Water Quality Control Plant 2501 Embarcadero Way 650-329-2122 Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Walgreens 300 University Avenue 650-326-3404 Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-9 p.m.; Saturday, 9 a.m.-6 p.m.; Sunday, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

San Martin

★ South County Sub-Station 80 W. Highland Ave., Bldg. K 408-686-3650 Monday-Friday, 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m.

San Jose

Enborg Pharmacy (Mental Health Clients Only)
2221 Enborg Lane
408-885-4100
Medication box is located at the central
wellness center next door that opens
8 a.m.-5 p.m.

- ★ Office of the Sheriff
 55 W. Younger Ave.
 408-808-4405
 Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
 - San Jose State Student Health Pharmacy One Washington Square 408-924-6122
- ★ Valley Specialty Center Outpatient Pharmacy 751 S. Bascom Ave. 408-885-2310 Daily, 9 a.m.-10 p.m.
- ★ Valley Health Center at Bascom Pharmacy 750 S. Bascom Ave., Ste. 120 408-885-2320 Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
- ★ Valley Health Center East Valley Pharmacy 1993 McKee Road 408-254-6340 Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-9:30 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
- ★ Valley Health Center at Lenzen Pharmacy 976 Lenzen Ave., Ste. 1400 408-792-5169 Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m.
- ★ Valley Health Center at Moorpark Pharmacy 2400 Moorpark Ave. 408-885-7675 Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-8 p.m.

★ Valley Health Center at Tully Pharmacy 500 Tully Road 408-817-1360 Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Santa Clara

★ City of Santa Clara Police Department 601 El Camino Real 408-615-4721 or 408-615-4700 Daily, 7 a.m.-6 p.m. City of Santa Clara residents only

Sunnyvale

- ★ Valley Health Center at Sunnyvale 660 S. Fair Oaks Ave. 408-992-4830 Monday-Thursday, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
- ★ Sunnyvale fire stations 408-730-7100 Please call in advance for hours and other information. Fire stations listed below are for Sunnyvale residents only.
 - Fire Station 1
 171 N. Matilda Ave.
 - Fire Station 2
 795 E. Argues Ave.
 - Fire Station 3
 910 Ticonderoga Drive
 - Fire Station 4 996 S. Wolfe Road
 - Fire Station 5 1120 Innovation Ave.
 - Fire Station 6
 1282 N. Lawrence Station Road

on Santa Clara Valley nia Water District



