

The current U.S. Surgeon General, Regina Benjamin, MD, recently remarked that “prevention is the foundation of the healthcare system.” Prevention is also the key to public health. Public health can be defined as the provision of care and preventive activities at the community or population level, through education, research, service programs, policies, and laws. Pharmacists have played a key role in public health activities and programs. They contribute to health education and promotion by providing patient education, immunizations in all 50 states, and smoking cessation. The pharmacist is also involved in many health screenings including cardiovascular and diabetes risk, and osteoporosis. Finally, pharmacists are also key players in the treatment of disease by providing medication counseling and medication therapy management to optimize medication use and prevent adverse drug reactions.

There is no better time than the month of April to spread the word about public health. In 1995, former President William Jefferson Clinton proclaimed the first full week of April as National Public Health Week (NPHW). Each year since then, the public health community has celebrated this observance by focusing on an issue that is important to improving the public's health. This year's theme was “Safety is no Accident” and the focus was keeping Americans injury free at home, school and work.

We encourage you to spread the word about public health and visit your local pharmacist to see what preventative services he or she can provide for you!

References:

American Public Health Association. National Public Health Week. Available at: <http://www.apha.org/programs/healthweek/>. Accessed: April 19, 2011.

Truong HA, Bresette JL, Sellers JA, editors. The pharmacist in public health: education, applications, and opportunities. Washington, D.C.: American Pharmacists Association; 2010.