



Secretary Carol Aichele

# PENNSYLVANIA STATE BOARD OF PHARMACY



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April 2012

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## Pennsylvania Health Alert Network (PA-HAN) February 1, 2012

The Pennsylvania Health Alert Network (PA-HAN) is one of the major ways the Pennsylvania Department of Health (PADOH) rapidly distributes information on emerging public health issues (e.g. disease outbreaks) to health care providers, hospitals, emergency management officials, and other public health agencies. In a typical year, PADOH distributes 20-25 HAN messages to providers via email, fax, or cell phone, depending on user preference. PADOH feels it is important that all health care providers have access to HAN messages directly or through their health care facility in order to receive critical public health messages. This assures that public health is protected and allows Pennsylvania's health care providers to give the best care to your patients and community.

In mid-2011, PADOH switched to a new software vendor to support and improve the PA-HAN. The updated system was completed in July and the new version of the PA-HAN can be found at the following link <https://han.pa.gov/>. During the conversion process, some users were removed from the system and cannot be reinstated to the user list without re-registering. PADOH therefore requests that any previous user who is not currently receiving HAN messages register as a Health Alert recipient in the new system. In addition, any provider who would like to receive HAN messages for the first time should also register in the new system.

To access the new PA-HAN Registration Site, click on the following link: <https://han.pa.gov/>. Under the second paragraph there is a gray 'Register Now' button. This option will walk the user through the registration process. If you have any questions about the HAN system or the registration requirements, please ask for Stacey Kalinoski in the PADOH at 717-265-8890 or [skalinoski@pa.gov](mailto:skalinoski@pa.gov).

## The S.A.R.P.H. Pharmacy Peer Assistance Program Pennsylvania's Approach to the Impaired Pharmacist

The purpose of a Pharmacist Peer Assistance Program is to assist impaired pharmacists and to provide a program to educate, inform and assist the pharmacy profession concerning the issue of impaired practice. Impairment encompasses all physical, mental/emotional and psychiatric disorders, and substance abuse that adversely affects a pharmacist's ability to practice.

As defined by many state practice acts, "Pharmacy practice is impaired when the individual is unable to meet the requirements of the professional code of ethics and standards of practice because cognitive, interpersonal, or psychomotor skills are affected by conditions of the individual in interactions in the workplace." The Pennsylvania Pharmacy Act states, "the Board shall have the power to refuse, revoke or suspend the license of any pharmacist upon proof satisfactory to it that the pharmacist...is unfit to practice pharmacy because of intemperance in the use of alcoholic beverages, controlled substances or any other substance which impairs the intellect and judgment to such an extent as to impair the performance of professional duties...[or] is unfit or unable to practice pharmacy by reason of a physical or mental disease or disability...."

S.A.R.P.H. is the Pennsylvania Pharmacy Peer Assistance Program designated to assist pharmacists who may be suffering from drug and/or alcohol abuse, mental illness or physical illness that negatively impacts their ability to practice the profession of pharmacy safely and competently. Our mission is to reach a pharmacist experiencing problems before his/her practice is affected. We are a drug free advocacy program. S.A.R.P.H. stands for "S\*ecundum \*A\*rtem \*R\*eaching

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State Board of Pharmacy

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\*P\*armacists with \*H\*elp. Our concern is for both the pharmacist and the public.

The primary goals of S.A.R.P.H. are:

- 1) To protect the public from unsafe practitioners.
- 2) Promote the early identification, intervention, treatment and rehabilitation of impaired pharmacists and pharmacy students.
- 3) To assist impaired pharmacists and students in their recovery process and safe return to professional practice through ongoing monitoring requirements.
- 4) To increase awareness of impairment issues in the pharmacy profession through education of licensees, employers and peers within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Many experts now believe that 15% to 20% of pharmacists may develop a substance use disorder. Alcohol or drug addicted pharmacists were once pariahs, banished from the profession. They received little help and less sympathy. Pennsylvania is fortunate to have one of the leading, nationally recognized peer assistance programs. S.A.R.P.H. was established in 1984 and since then, over two thousand pharmacists' lives and careers have been saved. Slowly, over the past twenty-eight years, attitudes have changed and the focus is now on treatment and rehabilitation. The S.A.R.P.H. Pharmacy Peer Assistance Program is a 501(c)(3) (tax-exempt) non-profit organization with a nine-member (non-paid) board of directors. It is free standing and separate from the State Board of Pharmacy and the Pennsylvania's professional pharmacy organizations.

#### ARE YOU AWARE?

THAT: As a pharmacist you have a mandatory reporting requirement outlined in the Pennsylvania Pharmacy Act as follows:

Any hospital or health care facility, peer or colleague who has substantial evidence that a professional has an active addictive disease for which the professional is not receiving treatment, is diverting a controlled substance or is mentally or physically incompetent to carry out the duties of his or her license shall make or cause to be

made a report to the Board. Any person or facility who reports pursuant to this section, in good faith and without malice shall be immune from any civil or criminal liability arising from such report.

Failure to provide such report shall subject the person or facility to a fine not to exceed one thousand dollars (\$1,000).

THAT: Pharmacists are legally responsible any time they sign out controlled substances for where the medications went:

If you do not document, you need to explain if you:

Took it for personal use.

Sold it to supplement your income.

Gave it to a family member or friend.

Failed to follow documentation policies and procedures.

THAT: Diversion (theft) of medication is a criminal act and a felony?

THAT: Discipline by the Board of Pharmacy is public and permanent?

THAT: A license suspension will result in a pharmacist being placed on a Medicare and Medicaid exclusion list? This essentially prevents a pharmacist from working in any capacity in any facility that receives Medicare or Medicaid funds.

THAT: You will be considered impaired on duty if you consume alcoholic beverages even the night before going into work and your blood alcohol is anything above 0? Your blood alcohol only decreases by 0.01 % each hour? One drink consists of one 12 ounce beer, one 5 ounce glass of wine and one mixed drink with 1.5 ounces of 80-proof liquor. A DUI conviction is reportable on your license application or renewal?

THAT: Peers falsely believe that to confront or report an impaired coworker would result in the coworker being fired and losing their license.

In fact, the impaired professional who is unreported and thus cannot be helped, stands to lose his/her job, friends, license, family, homes, and possibly their life.

In a situation where a pharmacist suspects another's practice may be impaired, the pharmacist's duty is to take action designated to both protect patients and to assure that the impaired individual receives assistance in regaining optimal function. Pharmacists are in the business of helping people to recover from illness. SARPH is here to help our own to recover from a disease that is progressive and fatal if left untreated.

Experts estimate that addiction affects one out of five pharmacists.

Believe what you see and care enough to do something...you just may be

**SAVING A PHARMACIST'S LIFE!**

**HELP IS AVAILABLE...IF YOU OR A COLLEAGUE ARE SUFFERING AND NEED ASSISTANCE; PLEASE CALL 800-892-4484.**

**ALL CALLS ARE CONFIDENTIAL.**