

Institute for Safe Medication Practices
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**ISMP Warns that Emphasizing Speed in
Community Pharmacy Prescription Dispensing
Can Lead to Errors**

Horsham, Pa---The Institute for Safe Medication Practices (ISMP) is sending a strong warning about a safety issue illustrated by a wave of recent national advertising—promoting and rewarding the speed at which community pharmacies dispense prescriptions. The Institute has written to the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (NABP) to ask for its support in discouraging speed as a primary marketing tool for pharmacy services.

One of the largest pharmacy chains, Rite Aid Corporation, now advertises a “15-Minute Prescription Guarantee” where up to three new prescriptions will be dispensed within 15 minutes (average of about 5 minutes) or less. If a pharmacy fails to meet the mark, the customer receives a gift card. And other chains as well as independent pharmacies have initiated advertising campaigns that offer similar guarantees to motivate customers.

A 15-minute dispensing claim for up to three prescriptions can jeopardize public health by putting pressure on pharmacists to work as quickly as possible and discouraging them from checking the patient’s history and drug profile; looking for possible drug interactions or duplications and other drug use evaluation concerns; calling physicians’ offices for clarification; and educating patients about the proper use of prescriptions (as required by federal regulations).

ISMP has received reports from consumers about serious medication errors in community pharmacies where the pharmacist seemed so rushed that work could not be thoroughly checked. Examples of errors due to volume and workplace distractions have been published in the *ISMP Medication Safety Alert! Community/Ambulatory Care Edition* newsletter.

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ISMP believes that prescription guarantees help promote the idea that the dispensing of medications is a ‘quick in and quick out process’ concerned only with counting tablets. ISMP finds it unacceptable to hold pharmacists to an unrealistic timeframe that can lead to medication errors. Instead, pharmacies should promote the clinical activities they perform and the availability of patient education services.

ISMP applauds the decision by New York State to outlaw the use of “inducements” (e.g., gift cards, coupons) to garner business. We urge other states, through their boards of pharmacy, to follow New York’s example.

In addition to writing to NABP, ISMP has featured this issue in the *ISMP Medication Safety Alert!* Acute Care and Ambulatory/Community Care editions as well as ISMP President Michael Cohen’s health blog (<http://www.philly.com/philly/blogs/healthcare/Dont-let-speed-determine-your-choice-of-pharmacy.html>).

For a copy of ISMP’s letter to NABP, go to: <http://www.ismp.org/docs/safetyissue1.pdf>

About ISMP: The Institute for Safe Medication Practices (ISMP) is an independent, nonprofit charitable organization that works closely with healthcare practitioners and institutions, regulatory agencies, consumers, and professional organizations to provide education about medication errors and their prevention. ISMP represents more than 35 years of experience in helping healthcare practitioners keep patients safe, and continues to lead efforts to improve the medication use process. ISMP is a federally certified patient safety organization (PSO), providing healthcare practitioners and organizations with the highest level of legal protection and confidentiality for patient safety data and error reports they submit to the Institute. For more information on ISMP, or its medication safety alert newsletters and other tools for healthcare professionals and consumers, visit www.ismp.org.

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