



News Release

Chloe Birnel, 206-352-2050

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Mike Foley, 206-448-4148
24 Hour Media BlackBerry, 206-793-6552

Group Health recognized for its partnership with Washington's Medicine Return Program

SEATTLE – We all know that working as a team can be difficult. Partnerships between businesses, government, and non-profits are often tenuous. But in Washington state, one such partnership is making huge strides to protect the community and environment, and is taking home awards as a result.

For the last two years Group Health has been working with a diverse group of local and state governments, and non-profits known as the PH:ARM team (Pharmaceuticals from Households: A Return Mechanism) on the Washington state Medicine Return Pilot Program. The pilot program gives consumers a safe, secure way to return household medications, reducing risks of accidental poisoning, illegal drug sales, and environmental contamination.

Last week both Group Health and the PH:ARM team added to their growing list of accolades when they accepted the Effective Partnership Award from the Northwest Chapter of the North American Hazardous Materials Management Association (NAHMMA). This award is given annually to a private/public/non-profit sector partnership that breaks down barriers and takes action to protect the natural and human environments, by improving the way we work with hazardous materials.

“The partnership between Group Health and the PH:ARM team is a prime example of an unlikely partnership coming together and taking initiative to solve a problem that negatively impacts both the community and the environment” said Dave Waddell, former president of NW NAHMMA. “Much can be learned from the successes of this partnership.”

The Medicine Return Pilot Program has safely collected and properly disposed of over 10,000 pounds of household medicines, making it the largest medicine return pilot program of its kind in the nation.

“This is a huge achievement. We could never have gotten to this point without the active participation and commitment of Group Health” said Cheri Grasso, Local Hazardous Waste Management Program in King County, who accepted the award on behalf of the PH:ARM team.

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Drug Take Back – continued

Shirley Reitz, Group Health associate director of Pharmacy Clinical Services and Bob Willott, Group Health Pharmacy warehouse supervisor, accepted the award on behalf of Group Health. Reitz explained their commitment to the project: “We’re proud to be a part of a program that benefits the health of our members as well as the greater community. It’s a win-win situation.” The Medicine Return Pilot Program operates out of all 25 of Group Health’s Washington state pharmacies.

To learn more about the Medicine Return Pilot Program or to locate your nearest drop-off location, visit www.medicinereturn.com.

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Editor’s note: If you’d like more information about this topic, or to schedule an interview with any of the PH:ARM team members, please contact Chloe Birnel at 206-352-2050 or CBirnel@pprc.org. Additional information can be found at www.medicinereturn.com.

Group Health Cooperative

Marking its 61st year, Group Health Cooperative is an innovative, consumer-governed, nonprofit health care system that integrates care and coverage. Along with its subsidiary carriers, Group Health Options, Inc. and KPS Health Plans, Group Health works to improve the health of more than 586,000 members in Washington and Idaho.

More than 9,000 staff employed by Group Health and Group Health Permanente, its contracted, multispecialty group practice, provide patient-centered, evidence-based care to members and the broader community through medical and specialty centers, hospitals, a charitable foundation, and a nationally recognized research center.

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