

Fighting the War on Drugs by Disposing of Them Safely

OSF HealthCare Newsroom

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According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the United States is experiencing an epidemic of drug overdose deaths. Since 2000, the rate of deaths from drug overdoses has increased 137%, including a 200% increase in the rate of overdose deaths involving opioids. OSF HealthCare is leading the way in helping reduce the misuse of prescription medications by installing safe, secure disposal boxes for the public at each of its hospitals in Illinois.

SOT Jerry Storm - Senior Vice President Pharmacy, OSF HealthCare

(Being able to dispose of them in a safe manner is just one of multiple things that needs to occur for us to be able to put our arms around this opioid epidemic that we're fighting. :14)

Jerry Storm is the Senior Vice President of Pharmacy for OSF HealthCare and started investigating a drug take back program after hearing from people who wanted a safe way to dispose of old medication but were uncomfortable taking them to a police station where most drop off boxes are located.

Additionally, Storm says the disposal boxes will also help keep drugs out of the groundwater supply and protect children and pets from accidentally ingesting prescription and over-the-counter medications, both of which are accepted by the boxes.

The containers can be locked and are monitored continuously when open. They operate much the same as a mailbox.

SOT Jerry Storm - Senior Vice President Pharmacy, OSF HealthCare

(You're going to open up a baffle, you are going to drop the medication – bag, bottle, everything – it goes within that baffle and once it drops in there you cannot pull it back out again. These containers are bolted to the floor so you're not going to be able to cart them off thinking you're going to be able to get something out of them if it's truly somebody actually after the opioids. :24)

Once the inner liner is full, it takes two pharmacy employees to remove it through multiple locks. The liner and its contents are secured and shipped to an incinerator and destroyed.

The drug disposal boxes are currently installed in nine of 12 OSF HealthCare hospitals in Illinois (Peoria, Galesburg, Monmouth, Kewanee, Alton, Bloomington, Pontiac, Mendota, and Ottawa). OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center in Rockford will have its box installed in the main lobby of the new North Tower when it opens in mid-April. Later this year, boxes will also be installed at the newest OSF medical centers in Urbana and Danville, Illinois.