



HEALTH CARE NEWS

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PHARMACIES AGREE TO COMPLY WITH STATE LAW

Drug Prices Must Be Disclosed Upon Request

Attorney General Eliot Spitzer recently signed settlement agreements with certain pharmacies that failed to comply with a state law designed to help New Yorkers comparison shop for the lowest prescription drug prices.

State law requires pharmacies to give to any person a list of its retail prices of the 150 most prescribed drugs and prominently post a sign: "Drug Retail Price List Is Available Upon Request." This law allows consumers to compare prices among drug stores before presenting a prescription to be filled. The office's investigation found that some pharmacies were refusing to provide drug retail price lists and failing to notify consumers of its availability. Under the terms of the agreement, the pharmacies have promised to fully comply with state law.

The pharmacies were identified during statewide surveys conducted by Spitzer's office with assistance from AARP volunteers. The surveys have consistently found that prices for commonly prescribed drugs can vary dramatically among pharmacies in the same county, city or even ZIP-code. The prices for the 150 most prescribed drugs collected during the surveys are posted online on the Attorney General's drug price comparison website - www.NYAGRx.org. A recent study released by the office

showed that consumers can save up to \$85 per prescription by choosing to buy their medications at the lowest prices reported on the website.

The pharmacies that have signed the Assurances of Discontinuance are: Duane Reade, store located at 93-01 Sutphin Boulevard, Queens; Stanley Getty Corp in Yonkers; Vernon Blvd. Pharmacy Inc. in Long Island City; and PNY, Inc. d/b/a Spring Valley Drug in Spring Valley.

NYS PROVIDES QUIT SMOKING PROGRAMS

According to the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, tobacco kills more than one New Yorker every hour. In an effort to address the tobacco epidemic, the state is currently offering smoking cessation services and educational information to New York State residents at no charge. Here are some useful tips on how to access these services:

- **To access stop smoking services, visit the New York State Smokers' Quitline at www.nysmokefree.com.** or call 1-866-697-8487. The Quitline is a free and confidential program that offers, among other things, a free starter kit of Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT), 6-weeks of NRT to eligible Medicaid and uninsured smokers, referrals to covered cessation services for health plan members, individualized tele-

phone counseling in English and Spanish and referrals to local smoking cessation programs.

- To locate state-funded Smoking Cessation centers and services in a region, visit www.health.state.ny.us/prevention/tobacco_control/community_partners/tobacco_cessation_centers.htm.
- To report a violation of NYS no-smoking laws visit www.smokefreeny.org/violation.php
- To get educational materials, or access helpful links and resources, visit the Department of Health's Bureau of Tobacco Control at www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/smoke/tc3.shtml.



DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that you can protect yourself from bogus health insurance policies and health care discount cards that are misleadingly marketed as health insurance? Check out whether an insurance quote comes from a legitimate insurer. A new free web service - InsureUonline.org - unveiled by the National Association of Insurance Commissioners, tells you whether a company is licensed to sell insurance and if there is a history of complaints against it. If you do not have access to the internet, you may call 1-866-470-NAIC.