



As You Sow Challenges Pharmaceutical Industry to Take Back Unused Drugs

OAKLAND, CA – December 8, 2015 – Citing the lack of free, accessible programs for disposal of consumer prescription drugs, As You Sow today unveiled [a new waste initiative](#) engaging and filing shareholder resolutions at major pharmaceutical companies, asking them to take responsibility for safe collection and disposal of unused and expired drugs and accessories. Research shows improper disposal of prescription drugs can exacerbate issues like drug abuse and water pollution.

“Only about 1% of U.S. pharmacies offer a drug take-back program,” said Conrad MacKerron, Senior Vice President at As You Sow. “Many people hold on to unneeded drugs because they lack easily accessible collection and disposal options, which can have tragic consequences.”

As You Sow has filed shareholder resolutions with [AbbVie](#), [Johnson & Johnson](#) and [Merck & Co.](#), asking the companies to develop policy options for working with industry peers to take primary responsibility for developing a national network of local take-back programs.

Overdoses from prescription pain medications killed more than 16,000 Americans in 2013. [President Barack Obama has stated](#) that most young people who begin misusing prescription drugs get them from the family medicine cabinet. Medical accessories like syringes and needles also need safe disposal options. The President’s drug control strategy calls for creating disposal programs in communities, but the industry has not led efforts to develop them.

Many drugs are flushed down the toilet, despite Environmental Protection Agency warnings against this. While sources are hard to determine, drugs are appearing in waterways. [An Associated Press investigation](#) found antibiotics, mood stabilizers, and sex hormones in water supplies serving 41 million Americans.

“We believe the companies that put medications on the market and profit from them should be primarily responsible for financing take-back systems,” said MacKerron. “We are concerned that the pharmaceutical industry has opposed such responsibility.” Belgium, Brazil, Canada, France, Mexico, Portugal and Spain are among countries where pharmaceutical-financed collection programs are in place. A French program gathered 30 million pounds of drugs in 2013.

“We heartily endorse As You Sow’s efforts to encourage pharmaceutical companies to be leaders in protecting public health and offer U.S. consumers the same convenient drug take back programs they operate in many other countries,” said Heidi Sanborn, executive director of the [California Product Stewardship Council](#), a group promoting producer responsibility for drug take back.

More about As You Sow’s Pharmaceutical Waste initiative can be found at www.asyousow.org/pharmaceuticals.

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CONTACT: Conrad MacKerron, (510) 735-8140, mack@asyousow.org
Andrew Montes, (510) 735-8144, amontes@asyousow.org

As You Sow is a nonprofit organization that promotes environmental and social corporate responsibility through shareholder advocacy, coalition building, and innovative legal strategies. For more information visit www.asyousow.org.