

Katie Johnson: Good morning and welcome to Apple a Day, Lake Region Healthcare's health and wellness show, where we feature news and information you can use to live a healthier life.

I am Katie Johnson, your host, and my guests today is Dan Kwapinski. He is the pharmacist at Thrifty White Pharmacy in Lake Region Healthcare's main clinic lobby, and he has partnered with us in the Lake Region Healthcare Foundation to offer a new option for convenient and safe medication disposal, and that's what we're here to talk about today.

Thanks for joining me, Dan.

Dan Kwapinski: You bet. Thanks for having me.

Katie Johnson: Medication disposal has been a hot topic for quite some time, probably originally driven by the impacts to the environment of improperly disposing our drugs, but it has expanded recently to include things like abuse prevention and antibiotic resistance, so we want to talk some more about why proper disposal is important and then let people know about this new option at Thrifty White's main clinic pharmacy location to properly dispose of the drugs, but, to start out with, let's tell our listeners a little bit about you. What's your background and your history with Thrifty White?

Dan Kwapinski: I graduated from the University of Minnesota at the pharmacy school in 2007. I took my first job out of school was here at Thrifty White Pharmacy in 2007, and I've been here ever since.

Katie Johnson: Wow.

Dan Kwapinski: I live down the [inaudible 00:01:19] community. It's a wonderful place to grow up. I'm happy to have my kids here, and we just really like this community. We don't feel like going anywhere else.

Katie Johnson: It's certainly been nice to have a pharmacy with a very vested pharmacist. I know many people trust you, come back to you. You're a trusted advisor, and that's a really important connection for patients, to have a trusted pharmacist as well, and I'm guessing that leads to maybe the reason that it was important to you and to Thrifty White to consider adding a medication disposal box to your location here. It's really part of that partnership of doing what's right for the community.

Dan Kwapinski: Thrifty White and Lake Region have become very close partners in lots of things. They're great to work with. They have created a great clinic pharmacy for us. I don't know if anybody remembers the old clinic pharmacy. It was more like a large closet.

Katie Johnson: Right.

Dan Kwapinski: I felt like a bull in a china shop a lot, but this new pharmacy is just amazing. They did a wonderful job, and I can't be happier with the space that we have been given and, just one thing that we could add to that, it is a way for our patients to be able to dispose of their medications conveniently and safely and in an environmentally friendly way.

Katie Johnson: Let's talk about that a little bit more. I mentioned earlier there are several reasons to remind people about the importance of proper medication disposal, so let's break that out and talk about them individually. Accidental poisoning and abuse prevention are probably now the two really big reasons.

Dan Kwapinski: Yes. Just getting these medications that are abusable and can cause harm, getting them out of circulation is very important both for reasons of accidental use and accidental exposure by things like kids and pets as well as intentional exposures to medication through diversion and abuse.

Katie Johnson: We were looking at some of the statistics that are listed on the box that's in your lobby, and a couple of them were startling in terms of the number of people who die from overdoses or from accidentally getting drugs into the wrong hands.

Dan Kwapinski: Yes, almost 200 Americans die every day from drug overdoses. I mean, that number is just astounding. It's more than those who are killed in car accidents. It's one of the leading cause of death of younger people. It's become an epidemic, as everyone knows and everyone hears on the news. This is just one thing that we can do to help combat that epidemic.

Katie Johnson: I was just listening or heard incidentally on the radio about a movement by realtors to educate folks who are having open houses in their homes because those have become targets. The medicine cabinet in a bathroom at an open house, people will come to check out and see if they can get the drugs there, and another of the statistics on the box that I found alarming, that was of teens who are becoming users or abusers of opioids. 62% of them say they got the medication from their own medicine cabinet, so it's really incumbent on all of us to be aware not to save those drugs because they're not ... It's not appropriate to use them next time we might have pain, right?

Dan Kwapinski: I've heard stories from law enforcement along those same lines. One that really stuck with me is they say one of the first things they do if they're called out to someone's house who has passed away is they ... The first thing they do is track down the medications and lock them up because they seem to just disappear out of the deceased home very, very quickly, and if we can get those out of those medicine cabinets, out of those kitchens, out of those ... just out of the home in the first place, that is just a good start.

- Katie Johnson: Another reason is the impact on the environment. We mentioned that's maybe what originally drove the safe medication disposal options in the first place. That's still a concern though.
- Dan Kwapinski: Oh, yes. There's been multiple studies that have found low, very low doses of things like hormones and antibiotics in our rivers and streams and bodies of water, and we have such pristine bodies of water in Otter Tail County. We should all work together to try to keep them that way, and this is just one way of doing that.
- Katie Johnson: Absolutely, so let's talk a little bit about then what can we do. There's plenty of reasons that we've talked about why it's important to do that. The safe disposal boxes like the one in the Thrifty White Pharmacy really are the best way. There are some drugs I understand that are okay to flush, some that aren't, but why not just keep it simple? Bring them all to the box.
- Dan Kwapinski: Yes, taking medications to the box, they get incinerated, they are ... it's the most environmentally friendly way to dispose of the medication, and the medications we're talking about, one of the ... The ones I worry about them most is when somebody gets put on an opiate medication for a surgery or a broken leg or anything like that. Those opiates, if you can get by with not using them all, that's probably the ideal. The more you take them, the more likely you are to become addicted. If you can use the lowest dose possible for the shortest possible time, that's probably the best. If you do that, you're going to end up with extra opiates, so, getting rid of those through the box is a good avenue.
- Katie Johnson: Tell us about what we should do if we bring our medications in. Do we have to take the label off the bottle, do anything prep-wise, or just bring it in and drop it off?
- Dan Kwapinski: You're more than welcome to block out the information on the label if you like, but you're not required to do that at this disposal site. It's really just as simple as opening up this little drawer in the box, drop it in there, and that's it.
- Katie Johnson: That's it. We should talk about what's accepted and what's not accepted because there are some things that are not appropriate to put in these medication disposal boxes. What can you bring? What can't you bring and drop in the box here?
- Dan Kwapinski: Each site is a little bit different, so I would check the recommendations for the site that you're going to, but, for our specific location, it is okay to bring in medications, over-the-counter medications, pet medications. We are allowed to take controlled substances like oxycodone, hydrocodone, morphine, things like that. Things that we are not allowed to accept is sharps containers. We're not allowed to accept liquids. We're not allowed to accept illegal drugs. We're not

allowed to accept inhalers, so, like albuterol inhalers, we can't accept those unfortunately.

Katie Johnson: Okay, and you mentioned that there are other locations throughout Otter Tail County, so, if the Thrifty White location here at the main clinic in Fergus Falls isn't the most convenient for you, we really do want to encourage people to take advantage of a safe dropbox location somewhere.

Dan Kwapinski: Yes, to take it to the box location across Otter Tail County is another great avenue for people to use because it is an environmentally friendly way to get rid of these medications and it gets them out of circulation, which is the most important thing.

Katie Johnson: Right.

Dan Kwapinski: Fergus Falls has it at Otter Tail County Sheriff's office. There's locations in New York Mills, Perham, Parkers Prairie, Otter Tail, Pelican Rapids, Battle Lake, and Henning.

Katie Johnson: If you just do a search for safe medication disposal, you'll find all kinds of resources. The Otter Tail County website lists all of those locations and their hours and addresses, so plenty of options for people to safely and conveniently dispose of their medications, and we're really grateful for this additional option at Thrifty White Pharmacy here in the main clinic, so let's remind folks, listeners who might not know exactly the location and the hours that your pharmacy is available with this dropbox.

Dan Kwapinski: We are located just inside the beautiful clinic at Lake Region. Our hours are Monday through Friday, 8:30 to 5:30. This medication dropbox is only available at the Thrifty White location at the clinic. The one on Lincoln Avenue off by Fleet Farm does not have this dropbox available.

Katie Johnson: Only at the clinic location, and, again, the clinics right on Vernon Avenue, 111 West Vernon, and, again, just inside the lobby right next to Caribou Coffee. Pick up a coffee while you're in, right?

Dan Kwapinski: Right.

Katie Johnson: I don't think you frequent that stop at all.

Dan Kwapinski: I know I go to Caribou Coffee almost every day.

Katie Johnson: Dan, anything else you'd like our listeners to know about this new dropbox disposal option or about safe medication disposal in general?

Dan Kwapinski: I'd just say it seems like it could be a simple thing, just getting that medication out of your cabinet, but it can actually really, really make a big difference to loved ones, pets. It could save someone's life potentially and it could really make a big difference for our environment.

Katie Johnson: We absolutely encourage you to take a look at what you might have in your medicine cabinet right now and dispose of it safely and, going forward, just be really mindful about your medications and properly dispose of unused medications.

Dan Kwapinski, pharmacist at Thrifty White Pharmacy here in Lake Region Healthcare's main clinic. Thrifty White has a new medication disposal box compliments of a partnership between Lake Region Healthcare Foundation and Thrifty White Pharmacy. Thanks for all your work on that and for being our guest today, Dan.

Dan Kwapinski: Thank you so much for having me, Katie.

Katie Johnson: Dan Kwapinski and Katie Johnson on Apple a Day, today, reminding you there is so much to do here. Stay healthy for it. Have a great day.