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Disposal of Pharmaceutical Waste Guidance

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Disposal of Pharmaceutical Waste Guidance

Purpose

This document was written to provide guidance for the collection and disposal of “non-regulated” pharmaceutical waste for all University of Maine System (UMS) campuses.

Scope

As of current, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) strongly encourages take-back collection programs for the environmentally safe disposal of unwanted medicines. This reasoning is quite sound as the indiscriminate disposal and accumulation of medicinal waste into landfills has potential long term consequences on the quality and safety of drinking water (not to mention unforeseen ecological affects).

Some pharmaceuticals may fall into the hazardous waste regulations because of their physical characteristics such as toxicity. Others may not fall into these regulations especially new medicines where toxicity research data is limited. Controlled substances are strictly regulated by the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) and are managed by UMS separately from all other waste types. Cytotoxic and chemotherapeutic medicinal waste are to be considered biomedical waste (if not treated as hazardous) under the Maine Department of Environmental Protection’s (MDEP) Biomedical Waste Rules (Chapter 900).

Where a pharmaceutical medicine does not fall under any of the aforementioned categories and would be considered “non-regulated”, our most environmentally responsible option is to manage this waste as hazardous to ensure its safe destruction.

If you have left over medicine that you no longer want, please contact Safety Management (581-4055 or sem@maine.edu) or your site safety officer to have this waste collected and disposed of accordingly.