

SOP Students Kick-Off American Heart Month with Public Education Campaign

APhA-ASP's Operation Heart launches campaign to highlight partnership with Million Hearts and educate public about the "ABCS" of heart disease and stroke prevention.



BY MALISSA CARROLL
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To help raise awareness about the prevalence and prevention of heart disease, members of Operation Heart from the American Pharmacists Association – Academy of Student Pharmacists (APhA-ASP) at the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy are unveiling a week-long campaign to educate students and the public about the “ABCS” of heart disease and stroke prevention during American Heart Month in February.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States. The “ABCS” of heart disease and stroke prevention focus on appropriate aspirin therapy, blood pressure control, cholesterol management, and smoking cessation to help promote a healthy lifestyle and reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke. Dubbed “Million Hearts Week,” this campaign also highlights the School of Pharmacy’s partnership with Million Hearts, a national initiative led by the federal Department of Health and Human Services that brings together communities, health systems, non-profit organizations, federal agencies, and private sector partners to make a lasting impact against heart disease and prevent one million heart attacks and strokes over five years.

“Million Hearts Week will provide a unique opportunity for student pharmacists to not only educate their peers about the importance of cardiovascular health, but to also empower patients to make healthy choices,” says Deanna Tran, PharmD, assistant professor in the Department of Pharmacy Practice and Science and co-advisor of APhA-ASP.

The campaign begins Friday, Feb. 1, and features a number of events that highlight heart disease and stroke prevention. It will end with a health fair at Baltimore’s Lexington Market on Friday, Feb. 8. Complete event details are provided below:

Friday, Feb. 1 — Million Hearts “Pledge” Kick-Off

Faculty, staff, and students are encouraged to wear red in support of American Heart Month’s National Wear Red Day. From Noon to 12:50 p.m. in Pharmacy Hall Atrium, Operation Heart will host a kick-off and pledge event for students to help raise awareness about the Million Hearts campaign. Faculty and staff are invited to attend from 12:50-1:00pm, when a group photo will be taken.

Monday, Feb. 4 — Appropriate Aspirin Therapy

Operation Heart will host “Aspirin Jeopardy” in Pharmacy Hall Atrium from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. This activity is intended to teach students about appropriate aspirin therapy as it relates to cardiovascular health. All students are invited to participate. Winners will receive prizes. Operation Heart has partnered with the Rho Chi Society, Alpha Zeta Omega Professional Fraternity (AZO), Student National Pharmaceutical Association (SNPhA), and APhA-ASP’s Project Chance to host this event.

Tuesday, Feb. 5 — Blood Pressure Control

Blood pressure screenings will be available from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at three local pharmacies: Fink’s Pharmacy, Professional Pharmacy, and Halethorpe Pharmacy. Pharmacy students will educate patients about the importance of maintaining a healthy blood pressure in order to help prevent a heart attack or stroke. Operation Heart has partnered with the National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA), Phi Lambda Sigma Leadership Society (PLS), and APhA-ASP Operation Diabetes to host this event.

Wednesday, Feb. 6 — Cholesterol Management

Students are invited to compete in a cook-off that will be held in Pharmacy Hall Atrium from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. This cook-off is designed to raise awareness about the importance of healthy eating and determine who can prepare the healthiest and tastiest meal. Winners will receive a prize. Operation Heart has partnered with the Kappa Psi Pharmaceutical Fraternity, Pediatric Pharmacy Advocacy Group (PPAG), APhA-ASP Operation Diabetes and Operation Self-Care to host this event.

Thursday, Feb. 7 — Smoking Cessation

Individuals can visit Lexington Market from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. to participate in “Faces of a Quitter” and pledge to quit smoking or to help a loved one quit smoking by signing and having their photo taken with a heart-shaped cut out. Operation Heart has partnered with the APhA-ASP Maryland Regional Operations and International Pharmaceutical Student Federation, American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP), Students Promoting Awareness (SPA), and Script Your Future to host this event.

Friday, Feb. 8 — The Charm of Million Hearts

A health fair will be held at Lexington Market from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. to educate the local community about Million Hearts and the “ABCS” of heart disease and stroke prevention. Tables at the health fair will provide information about appropriate aspirin therapy, blood pressure screenings, healthy eating, cholesterol management, and smoking cessation. This event is sponsored by a grant recently awarded to the School by the National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS).

“The Million Hearts Initiative was a project that I knew our student pharmacists would become passionate about,” says Jamie Elsner, third-year student pharmacist and APhA-ASP president. “Outreach projects such as Million Hearts Week allow our students an important opportunity to work together, engage patients, and showcase the role that pharmacists and student pharmacists play in impacting patient health.”

For more information about Million Hearts Week, please contact APhA-ASP members Anjana Patel, third-year student pharmacist, at anjanapatel@umaryland.edu or Helen Tran, second-year student pharmacist, at helentran@umaryland.edu.