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## **AARP and Sylester Flowers Honored for Significant Contributions to Pharmacy-Related Public Health**

### *Pharmacy Foundation of California Acknowledges Efforts to Ensure Access to Safe and Effective Medication Therapies*

(SACRAMENTO, CA) – As the population ages and chronic disease increases, Californians become more reliant on medications to improve and maintain their quality of life. Consequently, ensuring patient access to needed medications and their ability use them in a safe and effective manner is critical.

“Medications don’t help people who can’t get them, so ensuring patient access to needed medications is critical,” said Michael Negrete, pharmacist and CEO of the non-profit Pharmacy Foundation of California. “That’s why we are happy to recognize Sylester Flowers who has done so much to ensure that the medically indigent and individuals with HIV are able to obtain the medications they need.”

“But just ensuring access isn’t enough,” says Negrete. “We must also ensure that when a person takes a medication, they receive the support they need to prevent dangerous interactions and side effects. Without such medication management support, these drugs can do more harm than good.”

Medication-related injury has been an issue of growing concern. Last year a report co-produced by the Pharmacy Foundation of California noted an estimated 150,000 Californians are harmed or killed every year by medications. That’s almost one in every two hundred California citizens.

According to Negrete, much of this injury and death could be prevented if patients were better educated on their medication therapies. He believes medication use has become so commonplace, many have developed a false sense of security. “Too many of us believe our medications simply can’t be dangerous, or that our healthcare providers have the information and time they need to screen for all the potential interactions and side effects,” says Dr. Negrete. “Unfortunately, this is too often not the case and that is why consumers need more support in ensuring that their medication safety needs are being met.

“At the end of the day, the patient and their caregiver are the last line of defense against medication harm,” says AARP California State Director Tom Porter. “That is why our ‘Meet the Pharmacist’ days are so popular.”

The Meet the Pharmacist Day program provides an alternative to the retail consultation setting - a one-on-one extended counseling session between pharmacist and patient. In this relaxed setting there is time to educate the consumer on wise use of medication; an opportunity to identify possible drug interactions and a chance to build a trusting relationship between patients and their medical practitioners.

“Those events make such a difference for so many people,” says Dr. Negrete. “That’s why we’re happy to honor AARP California with one of our most prestigious awards.

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