

CARIE AT FRONT OF STATEWIDE EFFORT TO COUNTER DRUG INDUSTRY MARKETING

CARIE Partners With *Consumer Reports* To Get Patients, Doctors And Pharmacists Unbiased Information On Prescription Drug Effectiveness, Safety And Cost

June 1, 2007 - The Center for Advocacy for the Rights and Interests of the Elderly (CARIE) announced its leadership role in an ambitious collaboration with Consumer Reports to get free, unbiased information on the effectiveness, safety and cost of prescription drugs into the hands of Pennsylvania residents concerned about spiraling drug costs. The statewide effort is designed to counter the relentless drug industry marketing that promotes the latest medicines, but not necessarily those which are the most effective or affordable, and to help give seniors, low-income residents, the uninsured and others better access to information about cost-effective medications.

In introducing the program, CARIE's Executive Director **Diane Menio** will be joined by Pennsylvania Department of Aging Secretary **Nora Dowd Eisenhower** and **Tom Snedden**, Director of the Prescription Assistance Contract for the Elderly (PACE) Program in Pennsylvania as well as Bill Benson, Director of Outreach, Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs and Gail Shearer, Director Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs.

The free, public education project, with information provided by Consumers Union, the nonprofit publisher of *Consumer Reports*, through its innovative Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs program, supplies consumers with easy-to-understand information on side effects safety, effectiveness and cost based on the best available scientific evidence, not drug industry hype. Visitors to the Website site at www.CRBestBuyDrugs.org can find free in-depth reports about how drugs used to treat a particular illness or condition stack up against each other, as well as safety and price information. The site also identifies *Best Buy* picks for more than a dozen drug categories. Consumers can then take the information to their doctor or pharmacist to begin a dialogue about which drug may be best for them, and which may help them save money. The goal is to help consumers navigate the confusing prescription drug marketplace and get the best value for their health-care dollar.

"No longer will patients be led into making medication decisions based on drug companies' marketing of pretty butterflies, pretty pills or beautiful scenery," said Diane Menio, Director of CARIE. "Using the Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs program, patients, together

with their physician and pharmacist, will be able to choose medications based on the best clinical evidence of the drug's effectiveness, safety, and in many cases, cost savings.”

CARIE will be collaborating with physicians, health plans and pharmacists to counter drug company marketing with the easily understood Consumer Reports Best Buy Drug materials. CARIE also will place small posters in medical clinic examining rooms and lobbies encouraging patients to talk to their doctor about the Consumer Reports Best Buy Drug program. It is expected that the posters will be appearing in thousands of examining rooms in Pennsylvania in the next few months.

“Pennsylvania has the second largest per capita senior population in the country. Consumers Union selected to partner with CARIE because of its extensive ties to the target community,” said Gail Shearer, project director of Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs. “We hope to level the playing field for consumers who are confused by all the advertisements for prescription drugs, and empower them to make informed decisions with their doctor. The information is especially critical to Medicare beneficiaries, particularly those who are paying the full cost of their drugs when they fall into the feared ‘doughnut hole’, the gap in the prescription drug coverage.”

The *Best Buy Drugs* project, which is funded by grants from the Engelberg Foundation and the National Library of Medicine, combines evidence-based research on the comparative effectiveness and safety of prescription drugs with national-level data on drug prices. Thirteen classes of drugs are currently analyzed at www.CRBestBuyDrugs.org, including medicines to treat asthma, hay fever, migraine headaches, high cholesterol, arthritis pain, heart disease and high blood pressure, menopause, ADHD and Alzheimer's disease. The information on drug effectiveness is derived from the Drug Effectiveness Review Project (DERP) at the Oregon Health and Science University Evidence-based Practice Center. The DERP project compiles drug effectiveness data for states to use in shaping prescription drug coverage choices for Medicaid programs.

Since its inception in 1977, CARIE has been providing outreach, consultation and advocacy for older adults, their caregivers, and service providers throughout the region. What began as an informal group of concerned citizen advocates has developed into a nationally-recognized agency which each year protects and improves the well-being of thousands of elders locally while serving as a model and providing training nationally. CARIE's comprehensive array of services includes staffing a telephone hotline, serving as ombudsman for 7,500 residents in more than 200 residential care facilities, educating

long-term care staff about abuse prevention techniques, raising awareness about health care fraud and abuse, and serving as an advocacy organization on elder care issues.

For further information, please call 215-545-5728 or visit www.carie.org.

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