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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS TO FORM IMMUNIZATION ACTION COALITION

LITTLE ROCK, AR (Sept. 27, 2012) – During a September 27 “interest” meeting, healthcare providers from a variety of organizations in Arkansas determined that they should form an Immunization Action Coalition to provide better health care for Arkansans.

“Many Arkansans go unvaccinated for diseases such as influenza, pneumonia and shingles,” said Eric Crumbaugh, Pharm.D., Immunization Grant Coordinator for the Arkansas Pharmacist Association and facilitator for the meeting. “In 2011, only 40 percent of Arkansans over age 18 received a seasonal influenza vaccine. So we are encouraged and excited about forming a statewide coalition to enable better patient education about vaccines and to help raise the vaccination rate in the state.

Organized by the Arkansas Pharmacists Association (APA) and supported by the American Pharmacists Association Foundation and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the meeting included the following health care organizations: Arkansas Blue Cross & Blue Shield, Arkansas Center for Health Improvement, Arkansas Children’s Hospital, Arkansas Department of Health, Arkansas Foundation for Medical Care, Arkansas Pharmacists Association, Arkansas State Employee Benefits Division, Community Health Centers of Arkansas, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, and several vaccine manufacturers.

The main speaker at the meeting was Kathy Sebert, a registered nurse and the director of the Tulsa Area Immunization Coalition. Sebert talked about her experience forming the Tulsa Coalition and offered recommendations about forming one in Arkansas.

During the meeting, participants agreed to meet to discuss setting up an Arkansas immunization action coalition, with Crumbaugh as its volunteer leader. Several of the deliverables discussed were enhanced communication between organizations and a possible statewide immunization summit in spring 2013.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, every year 175,000 Americans are hospitalized with pneumococcal infections, but only 18.5 percent of people 18 – 64 years old who are at high risk for pneumococcal pneumonia

have been vaccinated. Also, only 68 percent of Arkansans over 65 are protected from pneumococcal pneumonia.

As of August 2012 more than 21,000 cases of whooping cough have been reported nationwide; if this trend continues, 2012 would be the largest outbreak in more than 50 years.

A study conducted from 1999 to 2004 concluded that for every 1,000,000 babies born, between 4 and 13 die before 2 months of age from pertussis.

One in three Americans will get shingles in their lifetime and there are over 1 million new cases each year.

There is now a vaccine that will decrease a patient's risk of getting shingles, but only about 1 in 10 are vaccinated.

The Arkansas Pharmacists Association, founded in 1882, is the statewide professional association representing approximately 2,200 pharmacists in Arkansas. APA strives to further the professional advancement of pharmacists, advocate the value of pharmacy, and safeguard the health and well-being of every Arkansan. Its mission is to advance a professional and business environment for Arkansas pharmacists to be successful and fulfilled in serving patients.

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