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Sen. Carolyn Allen Calls for Patient Rights and Treatment Option Awareness

Free pamphlet offers answers, sample letters and resources to help patients advocate for themselves

PHOENIX (April 30, 2009) — Sen. Carolyn Allen earlier today joined the director for the Arizona Department of Insurance and others to commend a new free pamphlet developed to educate patients about the rights they have regarding their prescription medications and treatment options.

At a press conference this morning on the Senate Lawn at the Arizona State Capital, the Neuropathy Action Foundation (NAF), along with Sen. Allen and Christina Urias, the director of the Arizona Department of Insurance, announced the launch of the brochure, titled "Getting the Medications and Treatments you Need: Understanding Your Rights in Arizona." It contains answers to questions regarding how prescription drug insurance works and the rights patients have to access necessary medications. It also contains sample letters and useful contacts to help patients advocate for themselves and receive the services they are entitled to.

"What I have come to understand is that if patients can't get the medications or treatments that their doctors prescribe, then this often means that the patient will experience unnecessary pain," said Sen. Allen, recalling her continued struggle with rheumatoid arthritis and how confusing it once was to wade through the paperwork and get her questions answered. "Ultimately, we should all have access to medications and treatment options that a physician prescribes, and we should all know our rights when it comes to those options."

Urias shared that her office receives about 50,000 questions and complaints each year from patients who are trying to navigate the system — and she wants all patients to know they are not alone. "We are a resource when it comes to patient rights. I want the public to know we are there as a resource and we are here to help."

Dr. David Saperstein, co-director of Neuropathy Association Certified Clinic at Banner Good Samaritan Medical Center and clinical assistant professor at the University of Arizona, said that the idea for the brochure came from the types of calls to the Neuropathy Action Foundation from patients who wonder why they have to take a series of other drugs before they can take the one originally prescribed to them, to those who for whatever reason have been denied a medication or treatment and want to know what their rights are.

"Patients already have a number of rights under existing law," he said. "Unfortunately, many Arizonans are unaware of these rights and do not exercise them."

Kerri Morey, who has multiple sclerosis, said the booklet would have made her life "much easier" had she had access to it when she was first diagnosed. "I encourage all chronically ill patients to keep their records," she said. "Everyone is worth it, and you are your own best advocate."

Patients interested in a brochure can go to www.NeuropathyAction.org or call (877) 512-7262 to request a free copy.

******Note to editors: Photos from the press conference available on request.******

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