



Pharmaca's pharmacy manager John Rose, Serra High School senior Renee Penaflo, La Jolla resident and Social Advocates for Youth program manager Karen Lenyoun, Serra High senior Jenna Murphy and UCSD pharmacy student Michael Pham PAT SHERMAN

## Students promote prescription drug dangers

Students at UC San Diego's Skaggs School of Pharmacy and at Serra High School in Tierrasanta teamed up with Pharmaca Integrative Pharmacy on Girard Avenue in April to help prevent misuse of prescription drugs and ensure safe disposal of old medicines.

The students created a patient advisory guide that will be available to customers at the pharmacy counter at Pharmaca. It includes questions for patients to ask their pharmacist, such as what time of day they should take their medicines, whether the medicine could have a negative interaction with other medications they may be taking and whether it is safe to cut a pill in half to reduce the dosage.

Involving high school students in the project was also intended to increase awareness of the problem of prescription drug abuse, said La Jolla resident Karen Lenyoun, with Social Advocates for Youth San Diego, which organizes the Elevated program at Serra High School.

"Prescription drug abuse is the No. 1 growing drug abuse problem among the high school student population and prescription drug overdose is the number one cause of accidental death in the county of San Diego and nationwide —

really startling statistics," Lenyoun said. "It's really important to educate the students at this level, so that they understand the dangers involved with abusing prescription drugs and can pass this on to their friends."

UCSD pharmacy student Michael Pham, who worked with Serra High students to produce the pamphlet, is part of a group at UCSD called Generation RX, which conducts similar outreach to middle and high school students about the dangers of prescription drugs.

Pharmaca's pharmacy manager, John Rose, said each pamphlet includes the addresses of places where people can dispose of prescriptions drugs they are no longer using.

"The main problem is correct disposal," Rose said. "Community pharmacies, we don't do it. People bring (medications) back and we don't have a way to dispose of it for them, and so they just end up in people's houses and they build up. ... Sometimes kids will just go through the cabinet and take from their parents ... and it's easier than people think to overdose from these medications, (for instance) if you've taken them before and then go back to the same dose." ♦ — Pat Sherman