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California Poison Control Launches iPhone App "Choose Your Poison"

May 16, 2011 – San Francisco, CA – California Poison Control System (CPCS) (<http://www.calpoison.org>) is spearheading poison education through a mobile health (mHealth) initiative by launching a free iPhone application, ***Choose Your Poison***, now available at the Apple app store in English <http://bit.ly/gg9vfG>. A Spanish version is also available but the user's phone must be set up for Spanish. The app was built in conjunction with University of California, San Francisco's mHealth team.

The *Choose Your Poison* game is also available online at <http://www.pillsvscandy.com>. The game is fun, interactive and underscores an important poisoning prevention message – that medications can easily be mistaken for candy. Last year, CPCS kicked off an SMS program with weekly poison tips sent to cell phones by texting TIPS to 69866. Messages are also available in Spanish by texting PUNTOS to 69866.

"By 2012, more smart phones will be shipped than desktop computers, and by 2013, people using their mobile device to search the Internet will overtake desktop Internet users for the first time (Morgan Stanley Research)," says CPCS communications director Iana Simeonov, who spearheads technology and mHealth (mobile health) projects for the CPCS. "We wanted to be on the forefront of mHealth in the area of poison control and since younger people 18 – 29 tend to search for health information on their phones – a group likely to be of child bearing age -- we felt it was important to make poison prevention information available this way."

Out of more than four million poisonings that are reported each year to poison control centers across the country, it is estimated that over 90 percent of them occur in the home. The majority of non-fatal poisonings occur in children under the age of six.

"Choose Your Poison is for everyone — health care workers, parents, teens, doctors, pharmacists -- anyone," says Simeonov, pointing out that children's vitamins can look so much like candy that even pros sometimes can't tell the difference.

In addition to SMS and Apps, CPCS hosts free "Ask an Expert" 15 minute sessions on California Poison Control's Facebook page and on Twitter @poisoninfo. Followers can ask questions and get information from physician and pharmacist experts. For more information, follow CPCS on Facebook at California Poison Control and on Twitter @poisoninfo.

The CPCS is dedicated to providing residents with the most up-to-date information and 24-hour help in case of poison exposure. Pharmacists, nurses, physician-toxicologists and poison information providers are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year by calling 1-800-222-1222. In most cases, a poison exposure can be safely managed in your home, avoiding a call to 911 or a visit to a crowded hospital emergency room. Many parents think about contacting the poison control services only in case of an emergency, but experts are available to answer questions any time.

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