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Washington, D.C.— At a time when millions of patients are uninsured and having difficulty obtaining the medicines they need to fight debilitating chronic diseases, America’s pharmaceutical research and biotechnology companies are stepping up their efforts to help patients all over the country through the Partnership for Prescription Assistance (PPA).

The PPA, so far, has helped more than six million Americans, including 59,000 Minnesota patients – 84 percent of the state’s total applicants, find assistance programs that might be able to help them, Billy Tauzin, president and CEO of the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA), said today.

“Patients in need are able to turn to the PPA, a single point of access to more than 475 programs, including nearly 200 sponsored by our biopharmaceutical companies,” Tauzin added. “These are programs that provide free or nearly free medicines to uninsured patients and those who are struggling financially. The PPA is an easy system to use and it generally requires only 15 minutes before patients find out if they may qualify for help.”

They can call a toll-free number (1-888-477-2669) or access a website (www.pparx.org). Operators who speak about 150 languages work with patients who call the telephone number.

Tauzin noted that the assistance programs covered by the PPA offer more than 2,500 brand-name and generic medicines for free or nearly free and more than 40 of the programs focus on the medication and health care needs of children. The PPA also provides information on nearly 10,000 free health care clinics around the country and has connected hundreds of thousands of patients with clinics or local health care providers.

“To help spread the word about these programs, the PPA works closely with such partners as the National Urban League, United Way, American Cancer Society, American Academy of Family Physicians and Easter Seals,” Tauzin said.

He stressed the importance of the availability of the PPA in a state where two-thirds of the people who die each year succumb to chronic diseases. A 2005 Minnesota Department of Public Health report says diabetes alone costs the state \$2 billion a year – one in ten health care dollars is spent on the disease.

Tauzin said consistent access to prescription medicines is vitally important because pharmaceutical treatments, in combination with good diet and exercise, often help to prevent and better manage chronic medical conditions. “For example, when patients take medications to control blood pressure and cholesterol, they often avoid full-blown disease and expensive and debilitating hospitalizations and surgeries,” he noted.

Tauzin emphasized America’s pharmaceutical research and biotechnology companies not only lead the world in developing new treatments and provide access to them through the PPA, they also have become actively involved in educational efforts to prevent and better manage disease.

A strong supporter of the Partnership to Fight Chronic Disease, PhRMA and its members have

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issued a comprehensive platform that calls for obesity reduction through a major national public health campaign; promotion of healthy lifestyles through employee-sponsored wellness programs; and improved care coordination and disease management for chronic disease sufferers through a new public/private health commission.

PhRMA's comprehensive "Platform for a Healthy America" also calls for improving the health of minority patients by eliminating health care disparities through disease prevention initiatives aimed at populations that suffer disproportionately from chronic diseases.

"Our companies are actively promoting disease prevention efforts because widespread tobacco use, lack of exercise and poor diet contribute significantly to premature death and disability and it is essential that we teach people better habits to help avoid conditions like heart disease, stroke and diabetes," Tauzin said.

The Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) represents the country's leading pharmaceutical research and biotechnology companies, which are devoted to inventing medicines that allow patients to live longer, healthier, and more productive lives. PhRMA companies are leading the way in the search for new cures. PhRMA members alone invested an estimated \$50.3 billion in 2008 in discovering and developing new medicines. Industry-wide research and investment reached a record \$65.2 billion in 2008.