



American Association of Eye & Ear Centers of Excellence

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AAEECE Initiates a Worldwide Patient Safety Initiative to Address Look A-Like Sound A-Like (LASA) Eye and Ear Related Medication Errors

Arlington, VA (March 1, 2010) – In an effort to directly address medication safety issues that affect hospitals, physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and patients on a daily basis, The American Association of Eye and Ear Centers of Excellence ([AAEECE](http://www.AAEECE.org)), formerly The American Association of Eye and Ear Hospitals (AAEEH), is asking other domestic and international organizations to join with the Association to review existing patient safety literature and medication error reports that pertain to these products. Likewise, the AAEECE is asking that new research be promoted to identify best systems and safety improvements which will benefit both patients and healthcare professionals with/without visual impairment. The AAEECE Board of Directors approved the initiative in January 2010.

AAEECE urges manufacturers to work with the Association in revising existing policies and practices of packaging these drugs which include a review of color coding, color schemes, fonts, plastic wrapping designs and logo placement on external boxes as well as on the immediate drug container. AAEECE is asking pharmaceutical manufacturers to adopt new and innovative safety practices when naming and manufacturing new ophthalmic solutions and containers. Finally, AAEECE urges that manufacturers also conduct risk assessments programs, prior to the marketing of new drugs that include patients with visual impairment and "front line" healthcare professional for feedback which includes a review of the administration, dispensing, storing, and distribution of potential look-alike sound-alike (LASA) medications.

“The Association is stepping up and leading the way to help address an issue that continues to threaten patient safety in our facilities and for many ophthalmic patients worldwide.” said Robert Betz, PhD, AAEECE President.

Since January 2010, the AAEECE has been in communication with the FDA informing them about the issue and our worldwide effort. Internationally, the Association has already enlisted the support of internationally recognized professional and safety organizations such as: *the*

World Association of Eye Hospitals (WAEH), the Institute for Safe Medication Practices (ISMP), the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP), the American Pharmacists Association (APhA), the American Society of Ophthalmic Registered Nurses (ASORN), the Pennsylvania State Nurses Association (PSNA), the National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA), and more.

Collectively the coalition of supporting organizations membership and affiliates represent over 500,000 members worldwide. The LASA website has received approximately 200,000 visitors from the United States, Canada, Europe, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, New Zealand, and more countries throughout the world. Visitors can view the website and *sign the E-petition* in support of the initiative at www.nyee.edu/lasainitiative. Also on the site is an e-survey for health care professionals and patients to help identify solutions to the LASA issue. The site additionally includes updates on the progress and articles written about the Initiative in the E-Petition News Update section.

The American Association of Eye and Ear Centers of Excellence is comprised of the premier centers for specialized eye and ear procedures in the world. Association members are major referral centers, offer some of the most innovative teaching programs in the world, and routinely treat the most severely ill eye and ear patients. The mission of these specialty institutions requires them to maintain leading edge technologies, enabling them to provide highly specialized services not available in general acute care hospitals. For more information about the AAEECE, please see www.aaeece.org.