

For Immediate Release

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Poison Center Founder to be honored at Luncheon October 3

SEATTLE, Washington - September 27, 2006 - William O. Robertson, MD, founder and medical director of Washington Poison Center will be honored for lifetime achievement in toxicology and poison prevention at the Inaugural Friends of Mr. Yuk Luncheon on October 3, 2006 at the Seattle Space Needle.

Dr. Robertson is a nationally recognized expert on poisoning and authored the sections on poisoning for the Merck Manual, Cecil's Textbook of Medicine and Dreisback's Handbook of Poisons. He is a founding member and past president of the American Association of Poison Control Centers and a recipient of numerous awards, including the American Academy of Pediatrics highest award – the 1998 Lifetime Achievement Award in Medical Education.

Throughout his entire career, Dr. Robertson has been a vocal advocate for patient safety, poison prevention and medical error reduction. His early work in the 1960's highlighted the role of home management of poisoning to eliminate life-threatening delays for treatment. His recommendations eventually led to the widespread use of Syrup of Ipecac in medicine cabinets across the nation. In Washington State he worked for years to support laws mandating the use of identification imprints on solid prescription medications and eventually over-the-counter drugs. "The plain unmarked white pill was leading to big mistakes in virtually all institutions," he explains. In 2006 Dr. Robertson saw more than 20 years of advocacy come to fruition with the new "anti-scribbling law" which went into effect on June 7. The new law mandates legibility of all medication prescriptions in the State of Washington, eliminating scribbled prescriptions and the errors that follow. The law says that if a prescription isn't handprinted, typed or electronically generated, it can't be filled. It's an accomplishment that is at the top of his mind right now.

In Dr. Robertson's name, the Washington Poison Center has established the William O. Robertson award, to be given annually to someone in the community who has made a difference in poison prevention. In addition, Dr. Robertson will receive a lifetime achievement award from Maxine Hayes, MD, MPH on behalf of the Washington State Department of Health and from Kathy Wruck, President of the Board of the American Association of Poison Control Centers.

Of all his accomplishments in the areas of toxicology, pediatrics and advocacy, what is he the most proud of? "That my wife said yes," he quips. Dr. Robertson will be retiring from his official role in late 2006 but will continue to serve as one of the associate medical directors who are available for consultation.

Washington Poison Center is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit agency, whose mission is to prevent harm from poisoning through expertise, collaboration and professional and public education. Washington Poison Center provides emergency and non-emergency information about toxic substances and poisons to callers from all over Washington State, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

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