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TAP WATER REMAINS SAFE DESPITE PRESENCE OF PHARMACEUTICALS

CHICAGO, IL, Mar. 13, 2008: Despite published findings of the presence of pharmaceuticals in the tap water of 28 major metropolitan areas, the Institute for Public Health and Water Research (IPWR) urges the public to continue drinking water for their health.

On March 11, the Associated Press published the findings of its survey, which determined that the number of pharmaceuticals found in tap water across the nation ranged from two in Indianapolis (caffeine and cotinine) to 63 in Philadelphia (including trimethoprim, carbamazepine, estrogen, acetaminophen and diazepam). However, the concentrations of these chemicals are well below their recommended or prescribed medical dosages and the AP reports that the water utilities continue to state that their water is safe.

“Tap water in the US continues to be closely regulated and monitored to ensure standards of safety and protection of the public’s health,” said IPWR Executive Director Jennie Ward-Robinson, PhD. “Drinking sufficient water is essential for the proper functioning of our bodies and the maintenance of good health and we should not allow the AP findings to discourage us from drinking water.”

In the days since the AP published the story, a media storm has descended upon this issue. Federal legislators have now called upon the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to set guidelines for limits of pharmaceuticals in public drinking water and to establish a national taskforce to investigate this situation and make recommendations to Congress on any legislative actions needed.

“IPWR commends the work of the AP and legislators for their efforts in bringing this issue to the forefront,” said Dr. Paul Hunter MD, Chair of IPWR Board and Clinical Professor at the School of Medicine, University of East Anglia. “We hope that Congress will continue to devote resources to investigating the role and value of drinking safe water to promote health, and to prevent disease and the adverse impacts of contaminants. Nevertheless, any policy response to this or any other issue has to be based on good scientific knowledge.”

Understanding the role that safe water plays in promoting health remains under-investigated and therefore could compromise our ability to respond when foreign agents are found in our water supply. Such evidence can also inform key decisions and recommendations regarding standards and guidelines for consumption. Ultimately, sound evidence regarding the value and role of water consumption will support a health-management pathway for protecting and keeping our water supply safe and available to all.

For more information about water safety and its role in good health, go to www.ipwr.org.

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