the costs associated with managing Chempacks.

But Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy G. Thompson recently redirected nearly $55 million of CDC bioterrorism-preparedness funding for states to help support other federal programs—leaving states with less cash for emergency-preparedness activities. Seattle’s Chempack program relies on a collaboration of several local groups and agencies, including the fire department, public health, law enforcement, hospitals, and government leaders, Vickery said.

“Pharmacists’ role. Seattle also turned to the expertise and advice of hospital pharmacists, “whom we love,” for its program, Vickery said.

“We felt very strongly that the pharmacist is a great adjunct in providing” information about proper storage and use of nerve-agent antidotes, he said.

“I think you build a much stronger program by partnering with the hospitals and the pharmacists within those hospitals.”

Pharmacists, Vickery argued, are “underutilized” in emergency-preparedness activities.

He urged the use of community pharmacies as points of dispensing for SNS drugs and antidotes in the event of a chemical, radiological, or biological attack. But, he noted, public health agencies and other groups have resisted that idea.

Washington Pharmacy Association CEO Rod Shafer argued that there are many reasons not to use community pharmacies as dispensing locations for SNS and Chempack drugs.

For instance, he said, residents may not go to their designated pharmacy in an emergency event, causing some pharmacies to be overwhelmed, which could lead to a lack of drugs at those pharmacies and eventually create chaos.

Vickery credited Shafer for getting pharmacists more involved in the state’s emergency-preparedness efforts.

“Pharmacy has a huge role to play” in the Chempack program, Shafer said, because pharmacy professionals understand the need for proper storage of drug products, distribution, and patient counseling.

The Washington Pharmacy Association, he noted, participates with the state’s department of health emergency-preparedness committee.

“We have been a part of that and have been from the beginning,” Shafer said. “I

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