

NEWS RELEASE

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New Survey Shows Improper Medication Use Reaching Crisis Proportions

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (Dec. 15, 2006) — Nearly three out of every four consumers admit they don't always take their prescription medications as directed. That's the key finding of a new national prescription drug survey released today by the National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA) and Pharmacists for the Protection of Patient Care (P3C). The survey found a major disconnect between consumers' beliefs and their behaviors when it comes to taking medication correctly, as well as a golden opportunity for pharmacists to use their specialized training and accessibility to help improve patient compliance and health outcomes.

While most consumers believe they are highly compliant when it comes to taking their prescription medications (64 percent said they follow their physician's instructions "extremely closely"), the survey found they're not nearly as compliant as they believe with nearly three-fourths (74 percent) admitting to some form of non-adherent behavior.

Key findings:

- o Nearly half (49 percent) said they had forgotten to take a prescribed medication.
- o Nearly one-third (31 percent) had not filled a prescription they were given.
- o Nearly one-quarter (24 percent) had taken less than the recommended dosage.
- o More than one in 10 (11 percent) had substituted an over-the-counter medication instead of filling the prescription they were given.

"These findings are very disturbing," said Bruce Roberts, RPh, NCPA's executive vice president and CEO. "They suggest that patients aren't fully aware of the implications of not taking the right dose of medicine at the right time. Medications are powerful and can be life-saving, but when used improperly actually can harm patients. Even more surprising, fewer than half indicated they had consulted their doctor or pharmacist before making these changes."

The economic impact of patient non-adherence has been estimated at nearly \$100 billion per year in increased hospitalizations, doctor visits, lab tests, and nursing home admissions. The human toll may be even higher in terms of diseases not treated, decreased quality of life, and preventable deaths.

"We're talking about much more than dollars and cents here," Roberts said. "It's really the well-being of the American public."

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Patient Adherence/2-2-2

The good news out of the survey was that consumers appeared open to tapping into the unique expertise of their pharmacist in order to improve medication adherence.

- More than eight out of 10 (83 percent) agreed that pharmacists can play a role in improving adherence by helping to make sure patients take their prescription medications correctly.
- More than two-thirds (68 percent) said pharmacists are more knowledgeable than other health care professionals when it comes to information about prescription medications.
- Nearly nine out of 10 (86 percent) said they would be likely to talk to their pharmacist about their medications.

"Two-thirds of consumers said they go to one pharmacy for all their prescription medications," said Ian Salditch, P3C's founder. "This presents an excellent opportunity for pharmacists to help educate patients about how to take their medications properly."

The survey also showed that a successful patient education campaign needs to utilize many communication channels, including physicians, pharmacists, insurance providers, the Internet, government programs, and written materials. Better packaging that reminds patients when to take their medicine also could improve compliance.

"What we need is a systematic approach that helps educate patients on the value of their medications and the importance of taking them exactly as prescribed, as well as one that promotes dialogue with the patients' entire health care team," Salditch said.

The telephone survey of 1,000 adults was conducted by the polling company™ inc. between Oct. 25-29, 2006. The margin of error for the survey is +/- 3.1 percent at the 95 percent confidence level.

The National Community Pharmacists Association, founded in 1898, represents the nation's community pharmacists, including the owners of more than 24,000 pharmacies. The nation's independent pharmacies, independent pharmacy franchises, and independent chains dispense nearly half of the nation's retail prescription medicines.

Pharmacists for the Protection of Patient Care (P3C) is a non-profit organization dedicated to educating lawmakers and increasing public awareness about the cost-critical health implications of medication misuse; and, to ensuring that federal health care reform legislation promotes the vital role of pharmacists in advancing the quality of patient care, and supports the patient's individual right to choose health care providers.

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