Good Idea to Forbid Direct-to-Consumer Advertising for New Prescription Drugs

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Majority of U.S. Adults Think it is a Good Idea to Forbid Direct-to-Consumer Advertising for New Prescription Drugs When They First Come to Market
More adults favor a mandatory rather than a voluntary ban
ROCHESTER, N.Y. â€“ July 21, 2005 â€“ Legislators and the pharmaceutical industry itself are considering some form of moratorium on direct-to-consumer advertising for new prescription drugs for a specified time period after a new drug comes to market. Findings from a new survey suggest that such requirements would be viewed favorably by many Americans; a 51 to 25 percent majority of U.S. adults tend to agree that it is a good idea to forbid direct-to-consumer advertising for new prescription drugs for some period of time after the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved a new drug so that doctors have time to become familiar with it.
Support for such requirements may be driven in part by public concerns about the FDAâ€™s ability to appropriately oversee prescription drug advertising to consumers. Majorities of adults believe the FDA is doing only a fair or poor job of ensuring that direct-to-consumer advertising for prescription drugs provides complete and accurate information about the risks and benefits of the medication (61%) and of deciding which prescription drugs can and cannot be advertised directly to consumers (69%).
These are some of the results of a Harris Interactive? online survey of 2,207 U.S. adults conducted between July 6 and 8, 2005 for The Wall Street Journal Onlineâ€™s Health Industry Edition.
Support for mandatory vs. voluntary limitationsMore adults say they would favor a mandatory rather than a voluntary ban on direct-to-consumer advertising for new prescription drugs. Specifically:
More than one-third (35%) would favor a mandatory ban on direct-to-consumer advertising for all new prescription drugs approved by the FDA for some limited period of time.

Sixteen percent (16%) would favor a voluntary ban on direct-to-consumer advertising for new prescription drugs approved by the FDA so that each pharmaceutical company could decide when to begin advertising to consumers.

MethodologyHarris Interactive conducted this online survey within the United States between July 6 and 8, 2005 among a nationwide cross section of 2,207 adults, ages 18 years and over. Figures for age, gender, race/ethnicity, education, income and region were weighted where necessary to align with population proportions. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.
Though this online sample is not a probability sample, in theory, with probability samples of this size, Harris Interactive estimates with 95 percent certainty that the overall results have a sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points of what they would be if the entire U.S. adult population had been polled with complete accuracy. Sampling error for the sub-sample results of adults aged 65 and over (373) and adults who take one or more prescription drugs on a regular basis (1,284) is higher and varies. Unfortunately, there are several other possible sources of error in polls or surveys that are probably more serious than theoretical calculations of sampling error. This includes refusals to be interviewed (nonresponse), question wording and question order, and weighting. It is impossible to quantify the errors that may result from these factors.
About the SurveyThe Wall Street Journal Online/Harris Interactive Health-Care Poll is an exclusive poll that is published in the award-winning Health Industry Edition of The Wall Street Journal Online at www.wsj.com/health.
About The Wall Street Journal OnlineThe Wall Street Journal Online at WSJ.com, published by Dow Jones & Company (NYSE: DJ; http://www.dowjones.com/), offers authoritative analysis, breaking news and commentary from top industry journalists. Launched in 1996, the Online Journal is the largest paid subscription news site on the Web, with more than 689,000 subscribers world-wide. The Online Journal provides in-depth business news and financial information 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with insight and analysis, including breaking business and technology news and analysis from around the world. It draws on the Dow Jones network of more than 1,500 reporters and editors -- the largest staff of business and financial journalists in the world. For the second consecutive year in 2003, the Online Journal received a WebAward for the "Best Newspaper Web Site" and was also cited by Yahoo! Internet Life magazine as the "Best Business News" site (2002 & 2001).
About Dow Jones & CompanyIn addition to The Wall Street Journal and its international and online editions, Dow Jones & Company (NYSE: DJ; dowjones.com) also publishes Barron's and the Far Eastern Economic Review, Dow Jones Newswires, Dow Jones Indexes and the Ottaway group of community newspapers. Dow Jones is co-owner with Reuters Group of Factiva, with Hearst of SmartMoney and with NBC of the CNBC television operations in Asia and Europe. Dow Jones also provides news content to CNBC and radio stations in the U.S.
About Harris Interactive?Harris Interactive Inc. (http://www.harrisinteractive.com/), the 15th largest market research firm in the world, is a Rochester, NY-based global research company that blends premier strategic consulting with innovative and efficient methods of investigation, analysis and application. Known for The Harris Poll? and for pioneering Internet-based research methods, Harris Interactive conducts proprietary and public research to help its clients achieve clear, material and enduring results.
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To become a member of the Harris Poll OnlineSM and be invited to participate in future online surveys, http://www.harrispollonline.com/.