

Prescription Drug Compliance a Significant Challenge for Many Patients

Contributed by Harris Interactive
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ROCHESTER, N.Y. â€” March 29, 2005 â€” One in three (33%) U.S. adults who have been prescribed drugs to take on a regular basis report that they are often or very often noncompliant with their treatment regimens for any number of reasons. Furthermore, nearly half (45%) say they have failed to take their medications because of concerns they had about the drugs themselves, and 43 percent report having not complied with their regimens because they felt the drug was unnecessary.

These are some of the results of a Harris Interactive? online survey of 2,507 U.S. adults conducted between March 16 and 18, 2005 for The Wall Street Journal Onlineâ€™s Health Industry Edition.

Of the 63 percent of adults who have had prescription drugs prescribed to them in the last year, drugs which are to be taken regularly, nearly two-thirds (64%) report that they have simply forgotten to take their medication, with 11 percent saying that this has happened "often" or "very often." Other top reasons respondents cited for noncompliance with their treatment regimens include:

- I had no symptoms or the symptoms went away (36%);
- I wanted to save money (35%);
- I didnâ€™t believe the drugs were effective (33%);
- I didnâ€™t think I needed to take them (31%);
- I had painful or frightening side effects (28%); and
- The drugs prevented me from doing other things I wanted to do (25%).

"Compliance problems are rampant for reasons that are multitudinous

and varied," states Katherine Binns, senior vice president of healthcare research at Harris Interactive. "These barriers leading to noncompliance present significant challenges to physicians and the U.S. healthcare system as a whole that will be difficult to address."

TABLE 1
TAKING PRESCRIPTION DRUGS ON A REGULAR BASIS

"In the last year, have you been prescribed any medical drugs which you were supposed to take on a regular basis? By "take on a regular basis" we mean any prescription that required you to take multiple doses on a specific schedule, from a medication youâ€™d take for just a few days up to something youâ€™d be taking for the rest of your life, and anything in between."

Base: All Adults

All Adults

Age

18â€“24

25â€“29

30â€“39

40â€“49

50-64

65+

%

%

%

%

%

%

%

Yes, drugs prescribed

44

50

51

59

76

84

No, drugs not prescribed

36

55

49

47

40

22

16

Not sure/Can't remember

1

2

1

2

1

1

-

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

TABLE 2 REASONS FOR NONCOMPLIANCE

"Please review this list of why people sometimes do not always take the drugs prescribed for them and say for each one how

often you think it has happened to you in the last year."

Base: Those with any drugs prescribed in the last year

Failed to Take Rx Drugs

(NET)

Very Often/ Often (NET)

Very Often

Often

From Time to Time/ A Few Times/Once or Twice (NET)

From Time to Time

A Few Times

Once or Twice

Never

%

%

%

%

%

%

%

%

%

I forgot to take them

64

11

4

8

53

12

15

25

36

I had no symptoms or the symptoms went away

36

9

3

6

26

9

8

10

64

I wanted to save money

35

14

8

6

21

5

5

11

65

I didn't believe the drugs were effective

33

7

3

4

26

8

5

13

67

I didn't think I needed to take them

31

7

3

4

25

6

6

12

69

I had painful or frightening side effects

28

7

2

4

21

5

6

10

72

The drugs prevented me from doing other things I wanted to do

25

7

3

4

18

6

4

8

75

Nobody reminded me to keep taking it or to refill my prescription

20

7

2

4

13

3

3

7

80

I had difficulty getting the prescription filled

20

4

2

2

16

4

4
8
80

The drugs tasted or smelled unpleasant

19
5
2
3
14
4
4
6
81

I had difficulty opening the bottle or swallowing the drug

16
3
2
2
12
4
4
5
84

I was confused by all the drugs I had to take

15
4

1
2
11
3
3
6
85

TABLE 3
SUMMARY OF COMPLIANCE PROBLEMS

Base: Those with any drugs prescribed in the last year

Total

%

Percent who are often or very often non-compliant for any reason

33

Percent who have been non-compliant because of concerns about the drug itself

45*

Percent who have been non-compliant because they felt the drug was unnecessary

43**

* Includes all respondents who said "once or twice, a few times, from time to time, often or very often" to at least one of the following reasons: "I didn't believe the drugs were effective," "I had painful or frightening side effects," "the drug tasted or smelled unpleasant."

** Includes all respondents who said "once or twice, a few times, from time to time, often or very often" to at least one of the following reasons: "I didn't think I needed to take them," "I had no symptoms or the symptoms went away."

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Q405, Q410

Downloadable PDFs of Wall Street Journal Online/Harris Interactive Health-Care Polls are posted at http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/newsletters_wsj.asp.

Methodology

This poll was conducted online in the United States between March 16 and 18, 2005 among a nationwide cross section of 2,507 adults aged 18 and over, of whom 1,648 have had drugs prescribed to them in the last year, drugs to be taken regularly for at least a few days or up to a lifetime. Figures for age, sex, 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.

In theory, with probability samples of this size, one could say with 95 percent certainty that the results for the overall sample have a sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points. Sampling error for the results of adults who have had drugs prescribed to them in the last year is plus or minus 4 percentage points. 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. This online sample was not a probability sample.

These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

About the Survey

The 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 Online

The Wall Street Journal Online at WSJ.com, published by Dow Jones & Company (NYSE: DJ; 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 & Company

In 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. (www.harrisinteractive.com), the 15th largest and fastest-growing market research firm in the world, is a Rochester, N.Y.-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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EOE M/F/D/V

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