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Instructed***

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Ipsos Public Affairs

Public Release Date: July 14, 2009, 11:00 am EST

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Survey Shows that Many Asthma Sufferers Have Misconceptions about How to Control Their Condition

Two Thirds of Physicians Treating Asthma Believe Less Than 50% of Their Patients Take Their Daily Asthma Controller Medication as Instructed

Misconceptions about Asthma Control Are Particularly Prevalent among Hispanics and African Americans

New York, NY – An Ipsos poll conducted on behalf of Astra Zeneca and the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America found that although an overwhelming majority of asthma sufferers (97%) agree that there are serious risks associated with uncontrolled asthma, many have misconceptions about asthma control.

Most physicians treating asthma sufferers do not believe their patients take their medications appropriately, as over two thirds (68%) believe that less than 50% of their patients take their daily asthma controller medication as instructed.

The study also found that two thirds of asthma sufferers (66%) believe that asthma is a very or extremely serious condition. Higher proportions say the same of diabetes (78%) or high blood pressure (73%), though fewer consider obesity (63%), high cholesterol (57%) or arthritis (43%) to be very or extremely serious.

- Hispanics (78%) and African Americans (84%) are particularly likely to believe asthma is a very or extremely serious condition.

Despite the seriousness of the condition and the risks associated with not controlling it, many asthma sufferers still have mistaken beliefs on how to adequately treat their condition. Most sufferers (94%) say they know the difference between a “quick-relief” medication and a “controller” medication; however, two thirds (69%) agree “quick-relief” medications can be used every day, and four in ten (42%) agree that it is appropriate to take controllers less regularly when symptoms decrease.

- Majorities of Hispanic (60%) and African-American sufferers (52%) say it is appropriate to take controllers less regularly when asthma symptoms decrease.

Furthermore, one quarter of all asthma sufferers (25%), say it is appropriate to stop taking a controller when they are no longer experiencing asthma symptoms.

- This opinion is also more prevalent among Hispanic (42%) and African-American sufferers (31%).

Controller Medications

Over six in ten asthma sufferers surveyed (62%) are currently taking a controller medication, most of whom (84%) say that they take their controller on a regular basis. However, over one in ten (12%) report taking their controller as needed for quick relief of an asthma attack.

- African-American (20%) and Hispanic (18%) sufferers are more likely than the general population of asthma sufferers to report they use controller medications for quick relief.

In addition, among all sufferers close to three in ten (28%) report having stopped taking any controller medication. Among them, seven in ten (71%) report they are not currently taking a controller because they only do so when they have asthma symptoms, or because they consider their asthma to be currently under control without the controller medication (70%).

One in three (34%) asthma sufferers who reportedly stopped using their controller because their health care professional said they no longer needed it. Similarly, many physicians agree that it is appropriate for severe to moderate asthma patients to take their controller medication less regularly when asthma symptoms decrease (22%), and to stop taking it if symptoms are no longer experienced (14%).

Even so, most physicians have some concerns about their patients discontinuing use of their controller medications. Most would be concerned that their patients would have to go to the emergency room because of an asthma attack (79%); that they would present an underlying progression of their asthma (78%); or that they would have to be hospitalized due to an asthma attack (76%).

Indeed, considerable proportions of sufferers who stopped taking their controller medication for any period of time in the past 12 months have experienced negative consequences:

- 21% required treatment with steroid pills;
- 17% had an emergency doctor visit – including 32% of African Americans;
- 15% had serious health consequences;
- 12% had to miss work – including 23% of Hispanics;
- 12% had to go to the emergency room – including 26% of African Americans; and
- 6% were admitted to a hospital.

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted June 27 - August 18, 2008 on behalf of Astra Zeneca and the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America. For the survey, a nationally representative sample of 1,001 asthma sufferers from all ethnicities and region were interviewed, in addition to: a supplementary sample of 436 African-American asthma sufferers across the United States to complement those from the national sample in order to achieve a total sample of 503; and an additional 448 Hispanic asthma sufferers across the United States to complement those from the national sample in order to achieve a total sample of 500 were interviewed.



Asthma sufferers were interviewed by telephone and were randomly selected from two sample sources: Ipsos' national consumer telephone access panel with more than 6,000 adult members who have reported being diagnosed as asthma sufferers; and targeted lists obtained from the Marketing System Group (MSG).

In addition, a sample of 300 primary care physicians (PCPs) including general practitioners, family practitioners, and internal medicine practitioners were interviewed online. In order to qualify for the study, physicians must have treated at least three asthma patients per week on average, and be board-certified or board-eligible. Physicians were randomly selected from e-Rewards' managed online panel of general practitioners, family practitioners, and internal medicine practitioners.

With samples of this size, the results are considered accurate within ± 3.1 percentage point for the national sample of sufferers; and ± 4.4 percentage points for the African-American and Hispanic Samples; and ± 5.7 percentage points for the physicians sample 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire population of adults suffering from asthma who have taken medication to control their asthma in the past 12 months in the U.S. been polled, or the entire population of board certified or eligible primary care physicians treating asthma patients the US been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. These data were weighted to ensure the sample's age/gender composition reflects that of the actual asthma sufferers in the U.S. according to data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

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