

ARE CANADIAN BENEFIT PLAN HOLDERS BECOMING “HEALTHCARE CONSUMERS”?

*A Majority Report Taking Control Of Decisions That Affect
Their Personal Healthcare*



Ipsos Reid

Ipsos Reid Public Release Date: May 31st, 9:00 a.m. EDT

Ipsos-Reid is Canada's market intelligence leader and the country's leading provider of public opinion research. With operations in eight cities, Ipsos-Reid employs more than 300 researcher professionals and support staff in Canada. The company has the biggest network of telephone call centres in Canada, as well as the largest pre-recruited household and on-line panels. Ipsos-Reid's

Canadian marketing research and public affairs practices are staffed with seasoned research consultants with extensive industry-specific backgrounds, offering the premier suite of research vehicles in Canada—including the Ipsos Trend Report, the leading source of public opinion in the country—all of which provide clients with actionable and relevant information. Ipsos-Reid is an Ipsos company, a leading global survey-based market research group. To learn more, visit

www.ipsos.ca

For copies of other news releases, please visit

<http://www.ipsos-na.com/news/>

© Ipsos-Reid Corp. 2006

*Washington • New York • Minneapolis • San Francisco
Vancouver • Edmonton • Calgary • Winnipeg • Toronto • Ottawa • Montreal*



ARE CANADIAN BENEFIT PLAN HOLDERS BECOMING “HEALTHCARE CONSUMERS”?

A Majority Report Taking Control Of Decisions That Affect Their Personal Healthcare

Laval, Quebec, May 30, 2006 – According to a new Ipsos Reid survey conducted on behalf of Sanofi-aventis, Canadian employee health benefit plan holders are seeking information, requesting second opinions and gathering information from sources other than their doctor – a trend many identify as the emergence of the healthcare consumers.

Sanofi-aventis Canada Inc. commissioned Ipsos Reid to conduct the survey, the ninth in a series, among 1,500 employee health benefit holders from across Canada. The survey sought to measure their changing views about the role of the public system and employer-sponsored health benefit plans in maintaining health services and products. The research also explored the willingness and preparedness of plan members for a greater role in their own health decision-making and their willingness to take on a greater portion of the financial burden for health costs.

The survey outlined three predominant themes:

- 1) Benefit plan members are attempting to make more informed decisions regarding their healthcare, prioritizing health-related educational and support services from their employers;
- 2) The survey results clearly show that plan members place a high value on their benefit plans; and
- 3) There is a better awareness of health benefit plan costs among members nowadays than there was in 1999.



Study Findings...

The emergence of the healthcare consumers:

- When it comes to their healthcare, six in 10 (61%) say they look up their own information, question their doctor and seek second opinions according to what they've learned. In contrast, the remaining 39% of respondents continue to believe that when it comes to their own healthcare, their doctor knows best and they seldom, if ever, question a diagnosis or recommendation.
- While 63% of health benefit plan members "very" or "somewhat frequently" obtain health information from healthcare professionals, the Internet and other sources of information are quickly becoming alternative healthcare resources for Canadians; and
- Four in 10 (43%) regularly access the Internet for information to help them in their healthcare decisions -- three in 10 (29%) rely on media and 16% routinely receive health information from their employer.

Employee plans highly valued:

- A majority of respondents, 63%, say they feel their employer-sponsored benefit plans meet their needs "extremely" or "very well." This figure is up from 56% in 2005, and is the highest level since 2002, when it was 65%.
- The majority of plan members (63%) would choose their current benefit plan over \$15,000 cash. (Considering that this amount far exceeds typical annual usage, the benefit plan appears to offer a security blanket for these Canadians).

Improved costs understanding:

Data garnered from the survey indicate there is a better awareness of health benefit plan costs among members nowadays than there was in 1999. Specifically:

- Today, 22% of respondents don't know or couldn't state a cost figure versus 39% of respondents in 1999; and
- There is a better appreciation of the true cost attributed to benefits today, as 54% of respondents identify the cost of plans as over \$1,200 annually, versus only 14% in



1999 (The employer's cost of a typical plan would generally exceed \$1,200 per employee annually).

Other highlights:

- A majority of respondents are positive about their work environment -- 87% of plan members indicate that they are "proud to work for their employer."
- When asked whether they are treated fairly and with respect by their employer, 86% of respondents agree and 77% indicate that they have "enough control over how and when they do their job."
- 79% of respondents indicate that employee assistance programs offering stress management, substance abuse support/management, eldercare and childcare are a "somewhat" or "very high" priority.
- Educational programs that focus on conditions such as high blood pressure, heart disease, cancer, diabetes, asthma or obesity are a priority for 77% of respondents.
- Almost two-thirds (63%) believe providing coverage for "cutting edge" drugs should be a "very high" or "somewhat high" priority for employer plans.
- When asked what steps employers could take to make it easier for employees to adopt healthier behaviours, plan members most frequently identify the following: fitness/sports activities (40%), health promotion (35%), healthier food cafeteria (8%), flexible schedules (7%), and less stressful environment (6%).
- There has been an increase in the number of respondents who say the quality of services provided by Canada's public healthcare system is "excellent" or "very good": 30% this year, up from 26% last year.

Sanofi-aventis commissioned Ipsos Reid to conduct the 2006 survey, the ninth in the series. Ipsos-Reid conducted "The sanofi-aventis Healthcare Survey" with a random national sample of 1,500 primary group insurance plan members who had a health benefit portion in their employee plan. One can say with 95 per cent certainty that the results are within +/- 2.5 percentage points of what they would have been had the entire population been polled.



Ipsos Reid

-30-

For more information on this news release, please contact:

*Harriet Shenken
Vice President
Ipsos Reid
(416) 324-2900*

For full tabular results, please visit our website at www.ipsos.ca. News Releases are available at: <http://www.ipsos-na.com/news/>