



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Research Finds Greater Focus on Self-Care Would Save Patients and U.S. Healthcare System Over \$5 Billion Annually** *New study highlights OTC medicines' valuable role*

**Washington, D.C.** — Americans could avoid approximately 50 million unnecessary visits to primary care physicians each year and save over \$5 billion per year with increased self-care, including the safe and effective use of over-the-counter (OTC) medicines, according to a recent cost analysis of health management options. These findings—along with a corresponding consumer and physician survey—were released today as part of the launch of *Your Health at Hand*, a new initiative that highlights the valuable role of OTC medicines in Americans' daily lives and in the United States healthcare system overall.

“This research quantifies what so many consumers already know—over-the-counter medicines provide Americans with safe, effective, and affordable means to conveniently address their healthcare needs,” said Scott M. Melville, president and CEO of the Consumer Healthcare Products Association (CHPA). “As consumers face rising healthcare costs and a pending primary care physician shortage, and as lawmakers look to reign in healthcare spending, these data show how over-the-counter medicines are smart solutions for affordable healthcare, especially at this critical time.”

The survey<sup>1</sup> of primary care physicians, including internists and pediatricians, sponsored by industry, found that on average the physicians surveyed believe that at least 10 percent of visits to their own offices “result from minor ailments which could be managed by the patient, including the use of over-the-counter medicines.”

In the corresponding cost-savings study, health economists Paul A. London, Ph.D., and Daniel Shostak, M.P.H., M.P.P., conclude that avoiding just half of the potentially unnecessary office visits to primary care physicians would save approximately 26.3 million appointments or \$5.26 billion annually.

“Our research suggests that greater self-management of healthcare, including more use of affordable over-the-counter medicines, would reduce patient visits to primary care physicians, saving billions of dollars and the time of these physicians who are in short supply,” said London. “We estimate that if even one-half of the unnecessary visits to primary care physicians could be avoided through such increased consumer self-management of their health, it would save consumers and taxpayers \$5.2 billion annually and that is a conservative estimate.” That estimate is conservative, London and Shostak go on to explain, because the number of avoided visits could actually be much higher. Further, the estimate does not take into account such other costs as patient transportation and time off from work. The entire [survey](#) and [study](#) are available on the *Your Health at Hand* website.

Illustrating the value and solutions OTC medicines provide to American families, to healthcare providers, and to the U.S. healthcare system overall is central to this industry-led initiative. “If we, as a nation, want to effectively address some of our systemic healthcare challenges, we must collectively empower consumers to make informed decisions and play an active role in managing their own healthcare

needs,” added Melville. “Taken together, these findings demonstrate why the *Your Health at Hand* initiative is so timely given our nation’s current healthcare challenges.”

CHPA’s recently-released national survey of U.S. consumers and physicians includes the following key findings:

- **96%** of U.S. adults believe OTC medicines make it easy for individuals to care for minor ailments,
- **92%** of physicians believe OTC medicines are effective and **91%** believe these medicines are safe,
- **89%** of consumers believe OTC medicines are an important part of their overall family healthcare, and
- **88%** of physicians agree that they recommend patients try to address minor ailments with self-care interventions, including the use of OTC medicines, before seeking professional care.

According to Val Jones, M.D., a practicing rehabilitation physician and CEO of Better Health, LLC, “Many of my patients use OTC medicines to treat common recurring conditions such as allergies, low back pain, and headaches. Once we've reviewed the symptoms, causes, and confirmed the diagnosis together, I often encourage my patients to use OTC medicines at their discretion and as directed. I like my patients to be proactive in managing their symptoms and to contact me if anything changes or concerns them. OTC medicines are a great way to reduce prescription costs where appropriate and to provide patients the freedom to take care of themselves without having to disrupt their days with unnecessary office visits.”

#### **About *Your Health at Hand***

For millions of Americans, OTC medicines are a trusted and affordable way to get well, stay well, and feel well. Families reach for OTC medicines to relieve symptoms associated with common, everyday ailments associated with pain, cold, allergies, heartburn, and various skin conditions, among others. In today’s healthcare environment, it is important that consumers—as well as healthcare professionals, policymakers, and researchers—appreciate and promote the value and solutions OTC medicines provide. CHPA is pleased to launch *Your Health at Hand* to highlight the benefits of OTC medicines, including:

- **Access** to healthcare options available 24/7 for busy families and caregivers;
- **Affordability** for both consumers and the healthcare system;
- **Empowerment** for individuals and families to meet their everyday healthcare needs; and
- **Trust** in safe and effective medicines.

For more information on *Your Health at Hand*, please visit: [www.YourHealthAtHand.org](http://www.YourHealthAtHand.org).

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*The Consumer Healthcare Products Association (CHPA) is the 130-year-old-trade association representing U.S. manufacturers and distributors of over-the-counter medicines and dietary supplements.*

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<sup>i</sup>The *Your Health At Hand* survey, conducted by Strategy One from November 5–15, 2010, involved 1,000 U.S. consumers aged 18 and over with a margin-of-error of  $\pm 3.1\%$ , and 500 U.S. practicing physicians (specializing in primary care, internal medicine or pediatrics) with a margin-of-error of  $\pm 4.9\%$ . The survey was sponsored by the Consumer Healthcare Products Association.