



## A National Campaign to Improve Poor Medication Adherence *America's 'Other' Drug Problem*

### **The Problem: Poor Medication Adherence**

Nearly three out of four Americans report that they do not always take their medications as directed.<sup>1</sup> The failure to take medications as instructed isn't just an individual's problem; it impacts all of us – as patients, caregivers, employers, health care practitioners, researchers, and tax payers. Nonadherence costs dollars and lives:

- One in three never fill their prescriptions<sup>2,3</sup>
- Between 1/3 and 2/3 of medication-related hospital admissions are linked to poor adherence<sup>4</sup>
- Total costs for nonadherence amount to at least \$300 billion a year<sup>5,6</sup>

***"Drugs don't work in patients who don't take them!"***

***-Former U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop***

**Non Adherence and Chronic Conditions.** With 45% (133 million) of Americans affected by at least one chronic condition, and 75% of health care spending going towards care of those with chronic conditions, the time to act is now.<sup>7</sup> For common chronic conditions such as diabetes and hypertension, which disproportionately affect minorities, proper adherence averages only 50-65 percent.<sup>8,9</sup>

### **The Solution: A National Adherence Education Campaign**

The National Consumers League (NCL) is developing and leading the campaign, with planning funds from the U.S. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). Building on extensive research and lessons learned from earlier adherence promotion efforts, NCL is coordinating and developing a multi-faceted, multi-year campaign to improve patient adherence. More than 100 diverse stakeholders have come to consensus on a campaign plan.

The campaign will:



- improve adherence by raising awareness of the problem through public education and a coordinated national communications campaign
- involve diverse public and private stakeholders, whose efforts NCL will help coordinate and harmonize with the campaign
- focus special attention on those suffering from serious chronic conditions
- encourage health care practitioners to communicate the importance of medication adherence to their patients and to support their efforts to improve adherence

Because poor adherence is so persistent a problem, only a comprehensive solution involving support for patients as they attempt to manage their medications, as well as coordinated action from health care practitioners, researchers, and policy makers has a good chance to succeed.<sup>10,11,12</sup>

## What the Campaign Can Do for Your Organization

### Adherence yields many benefits, as does joining our national campaign:

- Enhance patient safety, and improve our health care system at large
- Ensure a healthier and more productive workforce
- Build relationships within other sectors to inform your strategic plan and develop alliances
- Strengthen your reputation for good corporate citizenship through low-risk, high-gain collaboration in a public-private partnership led by a respected consumer advocacy organization
- Access to messages and themes developed

## The Campaign: Get Involved

**Become an Official Partner of the Campaign.** NCL is now seeking formal commitment from stakeholders to become Campaign Partners, as the campaign transitions into a phase of implementation. We ask that Partners support the campaign in a variety of ways, which may include:

*Providing Financial Support.* NCL needs a minimum of several million dollars to fund the first three years of the campaign, and the campaign's success will require a diverse set of stakeholders and campaign funders.

*Providing In-kind Support.* This campaign will also succeed through generous in-kind donations of research, tools of communication, and other resources.

*Participating in Working Groups.* NCL invites ongoing participation in the campaign working groups, which address and explore campaign evaluation, and outreach to health care practitioners and to chronic condition communities.

**For more information and to get involved, please contact:**

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**[www.nclnet.org/adherence](http://www.nclnet.org/adherence)**

<sup>1</sup> National Community Pharmacists Association and Pharmacists for the Protection of Patient Care Adherence Survey 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Infomedics Survey (2008)

<sup>3</sup> Balkrishnan, R., The Importance of medication adherence in improving chronic disease related outcomes, *Med Care* 43:517-20 (2005)

<sup>4</sup> Osterberg, L. and Blaschke, T., Adherence to Medication, *New England Journal of Medicine* 353:487-97 (2005)

<sup>5</sup> Balkrishnan, R.

<sup>6</sup> New England Healthcare Institute, "Thinking Outside the Pillbox," available at

[http://www.nehi.net/news/press\\_releases/110/nehi\\_research\\_shows\\_patient\\_medication\\_nonadherence\\_costs\\_health\\_care\\_system\\_290\\_billion\\_annually](http://www.nehi.net/news/press_releases/110/nehi_research_shows_patient_medication_nonadherence_costs_health_care_system_290_billion_annually).

<sup>7</sup> American College of Physicians, "Costs and Quality Associated with Treating Medicare Patients with Multiple Chronic Conditions," 18 May 2009 [http://www.acponline.org/advocacy/events/state\\_of\\_healthcare/costs\\_quality.pdf](http://www.acponline.org/advocacy/events/state_of_healthcare/costs_quality.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> US Center for Disease Control and Prevention, "Chronic Disease Overview," available at <http://www.cdc.gov/NCCdphp/overview.htm>

<sup>9</sup> Sabate E., et. al., Adherence to Long-Term Therapies, World Health Organization (2003)

<sup>10</sup> Osterberg, L. and Blaschke, T.

<sup>11</sup> Sabate E., et. al.

<sup>12</sup> Enhancing Prescription Medication Adherence: A National Action Plan, National Council for Patient Information and Education (NCPIE) (2007)