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Drug Companies May Be Headed for a Bruising Battle As Drug Importation Grows

The more drugs you consume, the more likely you are to shop abroad

A new Wall Street Journal Online/Harris Interactive Health-Care Poll shows that the number of Americans who are shopping abroad – whether in person or by mail or on the Internet – for prescription drugs is increasing. And the numbers who would shop abroad if they were able to do it has also been increasing. This survey also finds that the U.S. pharmaceutical industry runs a huge risk of antagonizing large numbers of people if it is seen to be fighting this trend.

“This is a very ugly issue for the pharmaceutical industry,” said Humphrey Taylor, chairman of *The Harris Poll*® at Harris Interactive. “As importation of drugs grows – and it looks set to grow a lot more – drug companies run a big risk of making more enemies as they fight to prevent importation. This would fuel the growing backlash against the industry.”

These are some of the results of 2,138 adults surveyed nationwide online between September 16 and 18, 2003 and include such main findings as:

- Those who say they have bought prescription drugs from a pharmacy in Canada or another country – by going there, on the Internet or by mail – have risen from 5% of adults last November to 7% today.
- The more money people spend out of pocket on drugs, the more likely they are to shop abroad. Fully 16% of those with out-of-pocket costs for drugs of over \$1,000 a year have shopped abroad.
- Those who say that they would like to shop abroad for prescription drugs if they were able to do so has increased from 40% to 48% now.
- This includes 53% of those with annual out-of-pocket costs for prescription drugs of over \$1,000.
- A lopsided 77% to 16% majority of the public says that they think it would be unreasonable – while fully 55% of the public thinks this is “very unreasonable” – for pharmaceutical companies to help “make it impossible for Canadian pharmacies to sell drugs over the Internet.” Observes Taylor, “As this is what several pharmaceutical companies appear to be doing, it seems likely that this will further damage the already battered reputation of the pharmaceutical industry.”

Health Care Poll

TABLE 1

**Ever Bought Drugs From Another Country
[Analyzed by How Much Spent in Total]**

"Have you ever bought prescription drugs from a pharmacy in Canada or another country – by going there, on the Internet, or by mail – to save money?"

Base: All adults

	Total Adults	Those Who Spent Different Out-of-Pocket Amounts on Rx Drugs in Last 12 Months (in U.S. and abroad)			
		\$0	\$1-\$200	\$201-\$1000	Over \$1000
	%	%	%	%	%
Have bought from another country					
November 2002	5	4	5	6	17
September 2003	7	3	11	7	16

TABLE 2

Would Buy Drugs From Another Country

"If you were able to buy some of your prescription drugs from Canada or another country – by going there, on the Internet, or by mail – at a substantially lower price than buying them here in the U.S.A., do you think you would do so?"

Base: All adults

	November 2002	September 2003
	%	%
Would buy from another country	40	48
Would not	29	26
Not sure	31	26

TABLE 3

**Would Buy Drugs From Another Country
[Analyzed by How Much Spent in Total]**

"If you were able to buy some of your prescription drugs from Canada or another country – by going there, on the Internet, or by mail – at a substantially lower price than buying them here in the U.S.A., do you think you would do so?"

Base: All adults

	Total Adults	Those Who Spent Different Out-of-Pocket Amounts on Rx Drugs in Last 12 Months (in U.S. and abroad)			
		\$0	\$1-\$200	\$201-\$1000	Over \$1000
	%	%	%	%	%
Would buy from another country					
November 2002	40	44	36	43	44
September 2003	48	53	45	47	53

Health Care Poll

TABLE 4

Is It Reasonable For The Pharmacy Industry To Oppose Importation Of Drugs From Canada?

“Some pharmaceutical companies want to make it impossible for Canadian pharmacies to sell drugs over the Internet so that Americans will have to buy all their drugs at higher U.S. prices. Do you think this policy of pharmaceutical companies is...?”

Base: All adults

	Total	Out-of-Pocket Money Spent on Rx Drugs in Last 12 Months			
		\$0	\$1-\$200	\$201-\$1000	Over \$1000
	%	%	%	%	%
Reasonable (NET)	16	14	20	13	9
Very reasonable	7	6	9	7	7
Somewhat reasonable	8	9	11	7	1
Unreasonable (NET)	77	78	72	81	85
Somewhat reasonable	22	28	21	22	14
Very unreasonable	55	50	51	59	71
Don't know	7	8	7	6	6

To access a downloadable pdf of this Wall Street Journal Online/Harris Interactive Health-Care Poll, or for previous issues, please go to: http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/newsletters_wsj.asp

Methodology

This study was conducted online within the United States between September 16 and 18, 2003, among a nationwide cross section of 2,138 adults, ages 18 years and over. Figures for age, sex, race, education, region and income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

In theory, with a probability sample of this size, one can say with 95 percent certainty that the results have a statistical precision of plus or minus 3.3 percentage points of what they would be if the entire adult population had been polled with complete accuracy. Unfortunately, there are several other possible sources of error in all polls or surveys that are probably more serious than theoretical calculations of sampling error. They include refusals to be interviewed (nonresponse), question wording and question order, interviewer bias, weighting by demographic control data and screening (e.g., for likely voters). 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 Health Industry Edition of The Wall Street Journal Online at www.wsj.com/health. The Health Industry Edition of The Wall Street Journal Online at WSJ.com, published by Dow Jones & Company, covers the business of health for health-industry professionals and features the award-winning coverage of The Wall Street Journal,

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breaking health news from Dow Jones Newswires and exclusive online commentary on the industry. The Wall Street Journal Online is the largest paid subscription news site on the Web with more than 671,000 subscribers. It recently received a Codie Award for Best Online Science/Technology/Medical Information Service and was named the “Best Business News” site by Yahoo! Internet Life in the magazine’s January 2002 issue.

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To become a member of the Harris Poll OnlineSM and be invited to participate in future online surveys, visit www.harrispollonline.com.

For more information, please contact us at:

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