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## Out-of-Pocket Costs are a Substantial Barrier to Prescription Drug Compliance

*As copayments increase over the next two years, noncompliance will probably get worse*

The out-of-pocket cost of copayments required for the filling of prescriptions is a substantial barrier to compliance, and this problem is likely to get worse. A Harris Interactive<sup>SM</sup> telephone survey of a nationwide sample of 1,010 adults surveyed in June this year found that more than one-in-five of all adults (22%) had not filled at least one prescription in the last year because of the cost.

Furthermore, one in seven adults (14%) said that during the last year they had taken a prescription drug in smaller doses than prescribed because of the cost. And slightly more (16%) said they had taken a medication less frequently than prescribed to save money.

### The impact of noncompliance

We have no way of determining the impact of this noncompliance on health outcomes, but it is widely believed that noncompliance toward drugs that treat chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension or elevated cholesterol can often have serious health consequences. It is probable, therefore, that noncompliance, on this scale, is a serious health problem.

It is also a business issue for the pharmaceutical industry whose sales are surely reduced by billions of dollars by noncompliance.

### Noncompliance is much higher among low income groups and people with disabilities

This Harris Interactive survey shows that noncompliance in order to save money is much higher with people in low income groups. The proportions of people in households with incomes below \$15,000 and those with incomes of \$15,000 to \$25,000, who did not fill a prescription (39% and 40%), took a drug in smaller doses than prescribed (31% and 24%) or took a medication less frequently than prescribed (21% and 30%) are about twice as high as they are among all adults.

Non-compliance for financial reasons is also very common among people with disabilities, many of whom are quite heavy users of prescription drugs.

### The problem is worse in the U.S. than in other countries

Several Harris Interactive surveys have shown that noncompliance because of out-of-pocket costs is much worse in the U.S.A. than in other developed countries where typically copayments are much lower (but rising there also).

In a previous survey of employers (*Health Care News, Volume 1, Issue 29*) Harris Interactive reported that many employers expect to increase employee cost-sharing over the next two years; in many cases this will mean more tiering of formularies and higher copayments. As this happens, noncompliance for financial reasons will probably increase. This is probably bad news for public health and certainly bad news for the pharmaceutical industry.

**TABLE 1**

**Noncompliance Because Out-of-Pocket Costs or Prescriptions**

In the past 12 months, was there ever a time when you (READ BELOW) because of the cost?

	All Adults %	INCOME						People with Disabilities %
		Less Than \$15,000 %	\$15,000 to \$24,999 %	\$25,000 to \$34,999 %	\$35,000 to \$49,999 %	\$50,000 to \$74,999 %	\$75,000 and Over %	
Did not fill a prescription for medicine	22	39	40	25	18	17	12	35
Took medicine in smaller doses than prescribed	14	31	24	16	12	10	4	27
Took medicine less frequently than prescribed	16	21	30	20	12	14	5	28

**About Harris Interactive<sup>SM</sup>**

Harris Interactive (Nasdaq: HPOL) is a worldwide market research and consulting firm, best known for *The Harris Poll*<sup>®</sup> and its pioneering use of the Internet to conduct scientifically accurate market research. Strengthened by its recent merger with Total Research Corporation, the Company now combines the power of technology with international expertise in predictive, custom, strategic research. Headquartered in the United States, with offices in the United Kingdom, Japan and a global network of local market and opinion research firms, the Company conducts international research with fluency in multiple languages. For more information about Harris Interactive, visit [www.harrisinteractive.com](http://www.harrisinteractive.com). EOE M/F/D/V

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