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QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH? MOST AMERICANS CONSULT PHARMACISTS & WEBSITES

Fairleigh Dickinson University, July 29, 2019 – Have you ever had a question about your health and wanted a fast and easy-to-get response? If the answer is yes, a recent poll finds you’re not alone. A majority of Americans, nationwide, routinely tap the expertise of pharmacists and online health-related websites.

In a survey of adults nationwide, Fairleigh Dickinson University’s School of Pharmacy and Health Sciences in Madison, NJ asked about the use of pharmacists for health information. Over half of all Americans consult with the pharmacist on duty when they visit a pharmacy (84%), the poll found. About a quarter (28%) do so routinely, and 56% do so less often. Sixteen percent say they never consult with a pharmacist.

According to [national polls](#), pharmacists consistently are seen as among the most trusted and ethical healthcare professionals.

“The ability to access a pharmacist for the provision of medication information without an appointment at no cost and at any time gives credence to the value and positive role they play in helping everyone lead healthy lives,” said Barbara Rossi, Assistant Dean at FDU School of Pharmacy & Healthy Sciences.

Most people speak with pharmacists only about prescription drug use, the survey found, even though they can get other health-related information. Nearly two-thirds (65%) seek prescription drug counseling, with significantly fewer asking about over-the-counter drug usage and side effects, injectable vaccines and immunization delivery or medical devices (15% combined). Among those who do not regularly engage with pharmacists, a majority say they simply don’t need their assistance (66%).

“Of those who choose not to consult with their pharmacists, the finding that so many say they don’t need the assistance of a pharmacist may speak to the public’s unawareness of pharmacists’ role in healthcare,” said Dr. Otito Iwuchukwu, Assistant Professor at the School of Pharmacy and Health Sciences. “Pharmacists are easily accessible and can provide reliable, patient-specific information tailored to the needs of the individual. “With pharmacists becoming increasingly relied upon for healthcare services, more people will recognize the role of pharmacists and seek them out to meet their health-related needs in the coming years. Pharmacists routinely check for drug interactions, make medication recommendations to other healthcare providers and patients,

provide medication counseling, help patients take their medications safely, assist in navigating insurance drug coverage or suggest a more affordable medication option, and immunize.”

Online health information sources

The FDU survey also asked about whether, and to what extent, people trust online sources for health information. It turns out that sources such as WebMD, disease-specific sites and sites affiliated with medical centers provide somewhat of a mixed bag for Americans who use them. Around half (51%) use them overall, with women (54%) significantly more likely than men to visit a website (43%), and older Americans (60 and above) the least likely (11%). WebMD and other general-purpose health websites attract the most visitors (40%), with hospital affiliated sources (20%) and other condition- or disease-specific sources (15%) used less often. Despite widespread use, there’s some evidence that online sources bring with them some degree of skepticism.

Among those who use online sources with some regularity, their usefulness rates about a seven on a scale of one to 10, with 10 being the highest degree of usefulness. When asked why they don’t go online for general health and symptom inquiries, a fifth of those polled (19%) said they avoid them because they don’t trust the information, find the information contradictory or feel anxious when they read what they find. Most (53%), however, go directly to a doctor or other health professional when they have a question.

“Online resources can be useful tools to learn about general health-related topics,” said Elif Özdener, Assistant Professor of Pharmacy Practice at Fairleigh Dickinson University School of Pharmacy and Health Sciences. “It’s important for consumers to know that the information gained from online searches may not have the same level of applicability to every individual. Also, any written material is open to misinterpretation and online health websites are not immune to this. “I’m excited to see that over half of those who read online health sources use the information to have discussions with their healthcare providers. Patient-centered healthcare is a significant factor in achieving good health. People that research and read health information can have more productive conversations with their providers and increase the likelihood of achieving their health-related goals.”

Methodology – The National Health Survey was conducted by The Fairleigh Dickinson University Poll on behalf of the FDU School of Pharmacy and Health Sciences. A random sample was drawn of adults nationwide, including in Alaska and Hawaii, and interviews were conducted on landlines and cellphones between January 28 and February 13, 2019. Respondents were screened in order to interview an adult, 18 or older.

A total of 1,000 interviews were administered by ReconMR in San Marcos, Texas, with 296 interviews conducted on landlines and 704 on cellphones by professionally trained interviewers using a CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) system. All interviews were conducted in English. Telephone numbers were purchased by ReconMR through Marketing Systems Group.

Results for the total sample have a margin of sampling error of +/- 4.03 percentage points, including the design effect. Survey results are also subject to non-sampling error. This kind of error, which cannot be measured, arises from a number of factors including, but not limited to, non-response (eligible individuals refusing to be interviewed), question wording, the order in which questions are asked and variations among interviewers.

Weighting was applied to the sample to more accurately treat the respondents as representatives of the total population of the United States. 2019 estimates of the U.S. population by Claritas were used to weight the data. In this case, the proportions of three characteristics were used; Race, Age and Gender. Each respondent falls into one, and only one, set and no respondent is left out.

For the third time, the FDU Poll received an “A” rating from statistician Nate Silver’s FiveThirtyEight blog. The ratings measure both accuracy and bias for all major polling services in the United States, providing an update to similar research the poll watchers conducted in 2016. FDU’s “A” rating puts it in the top 18 of the 396 polling institutes reviewed and graded from A+ through F. The FDU Poll was found to have a 94 percent accuracy rate for predicting election results, and is one of only two “A” rated polling institutes with zero bias to their rankings.

Tables

Have you been to a pharmacy in the last few months?

1	Yes	74%
2	No	26%
8	DK (vol)	0
9	Refused (vol)	0

		Gender		Age			Race		Education		Health insurance	
		Male	Female	18-34	35-59	60+	White	Non-white	HS/Some college	College +	Yes	No
First I'd like to ask you some questions about pharmacies. And by pharmacy, I mean a place you go to purchase over the counter and prescription drugs. Have you been to a pharmacy in the last few months?	1 Yes	67%	80%	58%	77%	83%	79%	67%	71%	77%	76%	58%
	2 No	33%	19%	42%	23%	17%	21%	33%	29%	23%	24%	42%
	8 DK (DNR)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	9 Refused (DNR)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

On average, approximately how many times a month do you visit a pharmacy?

Record number

0	Less than once a month	37%
1		32%
2		14%
3+		15%
88	DK (vol)	2%
99	Refused (vol)	0

		Gender		Age			Race		Education		Health insurance	
		Male	Female	18-34	35-59	60+	White	Non-white	HS/Some college	College +	Yes	No
On average, approximately how many times a month do you visit a pharmacy?	0 Less than once a month (DNR)	43%	30%	47%	35%	30%	35%	39%	35%	39%	36%	42%
	1	31%	34%	35%	31%	31%	30%	36%	34%	31%	32%	34%
	2	12%	16%	9%	15%	17%	17%	9%	13%	15%	14%	10%
	3+	10%	15%	8%	18%	16%	16%	14%	16%	13%	16%	12%
	88 DK (DNR)	2%	3%	1%	1%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%
	99 Refused (DNR)	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

When you visit a pharmacy, how often do you speak with or interact with the pharmacist on duty?

1	Always	28%
2	Sometimes	27%
3	Rarely	29%
4	Never	16%
8	DK (vol)	1%
9	Refused (vol)	0

		Gender		Age			Race		Education		Health insurance	
		Male	Female	18-34	35-59	60+	White	Non-white	HS/Some college	College +	Yes	No
When you visit a pharmacy, how often do you speak with or interact with the pharmacist on duty?	1 Always	30%	26%	34%	25%	25%	27%	30%	30%	25%	28%	29%
	2 Sometimes	23%	31%	21%	30%	29%	27%	27%	27%	27%	27%	22%
	3 Rarely	29%	29%	24%	30%	30%	33%	23%	25%	33%	30%	18%
	4 Never	18%	13%	20%	13%	15%	13%	18%	17%	14%	14%	28%
	8 DK (DNR)	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	0%	1%	4%
	9 Refused (DNR)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Why do you NOT speak with the pharmacist on duty? [N = 155]

- 1 They are never available 3%
- 2 I find the other pharmacy staff helpful enough 9%
- 3 I don't need to speak with them 66%
- 4 I don't know what they do beyond filling prescriptions 7%
- 8 DK (vol) 9%
- 9 Refused (vol) 6%

		Gender		Age			Race		Education		Health insurance	
		Male	Female	18-34	35-59	60+	White	Non-white	HS/Some college	College +	Yes	No
Why do you NOT speak with the pharmacist on duty? N = 155	1 They are never available	2%	5%	7%	1%	0%	1%	6%	1%	6%	5%	4%
	2 I find the other pharmacy staff helpful enough	4%	15%	12%	6%	11%	13%	11%	14%	4%	14%	6%
	3 I don't need to speak with them	64%	69%	53%	74%	69%	70%	70%	63%	70%	67%	82%
	4 I don't know what they do beyond filling prescriptions	6%	7%	14%	2%	3%	1%	3%	13%	1%	1%	0%
	8 DK (DNR)	14%	3%	7%	10%	12%	8%	10%	9%	11%	10%	5%
	9 Refused (DNR)	10%	1%	7%	6%	5%	7%	0%	0%	8%	3%	3%

Why do you speak with the pharmacist on duty? Choose as many reasons as apply. [N = 833]

- 1 Prescription drug counseling 65%
- 2 Over the counter drug counseling 10%
- 3 Medical device counseling 4%
- 4 Injectable drug counseling 1%
- 5 Immunizations 0
- 6 Other 0
- 8 DK (vol) 35%
- 9 Refused (vol) 6%

		Gender		Age			Race		Education		Health insurance	
		Male	Female	18-34	35-59	60+	White	Non-white	HS/Some college	College +	Yes	No
Why do you speak with the pharmacist on duty? Choose as many reasons as apply. N = 833	1 Prescription drug counseling	39%	37%	36%	40%	40%	39%	36%	36%	41%	41%	17%
	2 Over the counter drug counseling	14%	16%	14%	16%	13%	16%	14%	16%	14%	15%	20%
	3 Medical device counseling	2%	2%	1%	3%	1%	2%	3%	3%	1%	2%	5%
	4 Injectable drug counseling	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%
	5 Immunizations	3%	5%	4%	3%	7%	5%	3%	4%	5%	5%	0%
	6 Other	20%	21%	21%	21%	19%	21%	20%	20%	21%	20%	25%
8 DK (DNR)	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%	
9 Refused (DNR)	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%	

How often, if at all, do you go online to look for information about your health or a specific symptom?

- 1 Always 21%
- 2 Sometimes 30%
- 3 Rarely 22%

4	Never	27%
8	DK (vol)	0
9	Refused (vol)	0

		Gender		Age			Race		Education		Health insurance	
		Male	Female	18-34	35-59	60+	White	Non-white	HS/Some college	College +	Yes	No
How often, if at all, do you go online to look for information about your health or a specific symptom?	1 Always	17%	24%	28%	23%	10%	19%	22%	18%	23%	20%	27%
	2 Sometimes	27%	33%	33%	31%	25%	33%	26%	29%	31%	30%	25%
	3 Rarely	24%	19%	18%	24%	23%	22%	21%	18%	26%	22%	17%
	4 Never	32%	23%	21%	21%	41%	26%	29%	34%	19%	27%	30%
	8 DK (DNR)	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%
	9 Refused (DNR)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Why do you NOT use online sources for information about your health? N = 273

1	I don't trust online information	13%
2	The information is often contradictory	3%
3	I go directly to a doctor or other health professional	53%
4	The information is hard to understand	0
5	I do not have access to online information	13%
6	I get anxious when I read the results	3%
7	Other [vol]	14%
8	DK (vol)	1%
9	Refused (vol)	1%

		Gender		Age			Race		Education		Health insurance	
		Male	Female	18-34	35-59	60+	White	Non-white	HS/Some college	College +	Yes	No
Why do you NOT use online sources for information about your health? N = 273	1 I don't trust online information	15%	11%	16%	12%	11%	13%	13%	12%	16%	15%	0%
	2 The information is often contradictory	3%	3%	2%	4%	2%	2%	4%	1%	6%	1%	0%
	3 I go directly to a doctor or other health professional	55%	49%	56%	63%	45%	46%	61%	58%	42%	52%	100%
	4 The information is hard to understand	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	2%	0%
	5 I do not have access to online information	8%	19%	3%	11%	19%	19%	6%	14%	9%	13%	0%
	6 I get anxious when I read the results	2%	3%	10%	0%	1%	2%	3%	1%	6%	0%	0%
	7 Other (DNR)	15%	12%	14%	8%	18%	15%	12%	11%	20%	15%	0%
	8 DK (DNR)	0%	1%	0%	0%	2%	1%	0%	1%	0%	2%	0%
	9 Refused (DNR)	1%	2%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%

Which of the following sources are you the most likely to use for getting information about your health? [N = 727]

1	WebMD or other general purpose health website	40%
2	A government source, such as the Centers for Disease Control	8%
3	A source that's affiliated with a hospital or medical facility	20%
4	A source that's related to a specific condition or disease	15%
5	Other (vol)	14%
8	DK (vol)	2%
9	Refused (vol)	0

		Gender		Age			Race		Education		Health insurance	
		Male	Female	18-34	35-59	60+	White	Non-white	HS/Some college	College +	Yes	No
Which of the following sources are you the most likely to use for getting information about your health? N = 727	1 WebMD or other general purpose health website	37%	43%	49%	40%	32%	39%	42%	39%	41%	36%	0%
	2 A government source, such as the Centers for Disease Control	8%	9%	13%	7%	4%	8%	8%	7%	9%	10%	0%
	3 A source that's affiliated with a hospital or medical facility	23%	17%	17%	21%	24%	21%	19%	21%	19%	22%	100%
	4 A source that's related to a specific condition or disease	14%	16%	9%	17%	17%	16%	13%	15%	15%	15%	0%
	5 Other (DNR)	16%	13%	13%	12%	18%	13%	15%	15%	13%	14%	0%
	8 DK (DNR)	2%	3%	0%	2%	4%	2%	2%	2%	3%	3%	0%
	9 Refused (DNR)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%

On a scale of one to ten, with ten meaning the information is USEFUL, and one meaning the information is NOT USEFUL, how would you rate the information you get online about your health? [N = 727]

Average 7

		Gender		Age			Race		Education		Health insurance	
		Male	Female	18-34	35-59	60+	White	Non-white	HS/Some college	College +	Yes	No
On a scale of one to ten, with ten meaning the information is USEFUL, and one meaning the information is NOT USEFUL, how would you rate the information you get online about your health? N = 727	Average	7	7	7	7	7	7	8	7	7	7	7

What do you do with the information that you get online about your health? Do you... [N = 727]

- 1 Self-treat based on the website's recommendation 15%
- 2 Discuss with my doctor 53%
- 3 Change my behavior 11%
- 4 Nothing 16%
- 8 DK (vol) 4%
- 9 Refused (vol) 2%

		Gender		Age			Race		Education		Health insurance	
		Male	Female	18-34	35-59	60+	White	Non-white	HS/Some college	College +	Yes	No
What do you do with the information that you get online about your health? Do you... N = 727	1 Self-treat based on the website's recommendation	19%	14%	22%	17%	9%	15%	18%	17%	16%	18%	0%
	2 Discuss with my doctor	49%	51%	41%	54%	57%	54%	46%	52%	50%	50%	100%
	3 Change my behavior	11%	12%	14%	12%	8%	11%	12%	9%	14%	13%	0%
	4 Nothing	15%	17%	16%	12%	18%	16%	15%	14%	17%	15%	0%
	8 DK (DNR)	4%	5%	5%	2%	6%	2%	7%	6%	3%	3%	0%
	9 Refused (DNR)	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	0%

Question wording and order

First I'd like to ask you some questions about pharmacies. And by pharmacy, I mean a place you go to purchase over the counter and prescription drugs.

PS1 Have you been to a pharmacy in the last few months?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

PS2 On average, approximately how many times a month do you visit a pharmacy?

Record number

- 888 DK (vol)
- 999 Refused (vol)

PS3 When you visit a pharmacy, how often do you speak with or interact with the pharmacist on duty?

- 1 Always ASK PS5
- 2 Sometimes ASK PS5
- 3 Rarely ASK PS5
- 4 Never ASK PS4
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

PS4 Why do you NOT speak with the pharmacist on duty?[rotate options]

- 1 They are never available GO TO ON1
- 2 I find the other pharmacy staff helpful enough GO TO ON1
- 3 I don't need to speak with them GO TO ON1
- 4 I don't know what they do beyond filling prescriptions GO TO ON1
- 8 DK (vol) GO TO ON1
- 9 Refused (vol) GO TO ON1

PS5 Why do you speak with the pharmacist on duty? Choose as many reasons as apply. [Rotate options]

- 1 Prescription drug counseling
- 2 Over the counter drug counseling
- 3 Medical device counseling
- 4 Injectable drug counseling
- 5 Immunizations
- 6 Other
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

Now I have some questions about where you go for medical information.

ON1 How often, if at all, do you go online to look for information about your health or a specific symptom?

- 1 Always ASK ON3
- 2 Sometimes ASK ON3
- 3 Rarely ASK ON3
- 4 Never ASK ON2
- 8 DK (vol) ASK ON3
- 9 Refused (vol) ASK ON3

ON2 Why do you NOT use online sources for information about your health?[rotate options]

- 1 I don't trust online information GO TO ASP1
- 2 The information is often contradictory GO TO ASP1
- 3 I go directly to a doctor or other health professional GO TO ASP1
- 4 The information is hard to understand GO TO ASP1
- 5 I do not have access to online information GO TO ASP1
- 6 I get anxious when I read the results GO TO ASP1
- 7 Other [vol] GO TO ASP1
- 8 DK (vol) GO TO ASP1
- 9 Refused (vol) GO TO ASP1

ON3 Which of the following sources are you the most likely to use for getting information about your health? [Rotate options]

- 1 WebMD or other general purpose health website
- 2 A government source, such as the Centers for Disease Control
- 3 A source that's affiliated with a hospital or medical facility
- 4 A source that's related to a specific condition or disease
- 5 Other (vol)
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

ON4 On a scale of one to ten, with ten meaning the information is USEFUL, and one meaning the information is NOT USEFUL, how would you rate the information you get online about your health?

Record number

- 11 Depends (vol)
- 18 DK (vol)
- 19 Refused (vol)

ON5 What do you do with the information that you get online about your health? Do you...[Rotate options]

- 1 Self-treat based on the website's recommendation
- 2 Discuss with my doctor
- 3 Change my behavior
- 4 Nothing
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

Weighted Sample characteristics

	N (%)	MoE
Male	487 (49%)	+/- 4
Female	513 (51%)	+/- 4
18-34	277 (28%)	+/- 6
35-59	378 (38%)	+/- 5
60+	277 (28%)	+/- 6
Refused	69 (7%)	+/- 12
White	569 (57%)	+/- 4
Black	105 (11%)	+/- 10
Hispanic	184 (18%)	+/- 7
Other	141 (14%)	+/- 8
White	569 (57%)	+/- 4
Non-white	431 (43%)	+/- 5