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## Electronic Transmission Best Way to Reduce Prescription Errors, According to New National Survey

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### ***AmerisourceBergen Index Focuses on Top Government Healthcare Priorities, Pharmacy Services, Mail Order Prescriptions and Other Topics***

VALLEY FORGE, Pa., May 22, 2002 /PRNewswire via COMTEX/ -- Consumers believe that electronic transmission of prescriptions from physicians to pharmacists is the best way to reduce medication errors, according to the AmerisourceBergen Index(C), a national survey released today.

Forty percent of respondents chose this as the top solution for insuring accuracy in prescriptions. Typewritten -- as opposed to handwritten -- prescriptions from pharmacists landed in second place, with 34 percent of respondents selecting this option. Having pharmacists check prescriptions placed third, with 21 percent of those polled.

These findings were revealed in the latest AmerisourceBergen Index, which surveyed 1,012 people nationwide on a range of topics including what the government's top healthcare priorities should be, the use of mail order prescriptions, and the kinds of health services consumers would like to see in their local pharmacies. The quarterly survey was conducted by Opinion Research Corporation on behalf of AmerisourceBergen, the largest pharmaceutical services company in the United States dedicated solely to the pharmaceutical supply chain.

#### Universal Healthcare Insurance Tops List

Health coverage for uninsured Americans topped the list of health priorities, with 32 percent of respondents saying this should be the primary healthcare focus of the federal government over the next several months. Eliminating diseases, such as cancer, AIDS and heart disease, came in next -- at 29 percent. Twenty-seven percent of those surveyed selected Medicare drug benefits for senior citizens.

Among respondents over 65 years of age, 50 percent chose the Medicare drug benefit as their top choice. Twenty-three percent of those in that group reported that they had failed to fulfill a prescription on account of cost. Interestingly, two of the younger groups surveyed were more likely than those over 65 to have not filled a prescription on account of cost: 36 percent of those ages 25-34 and 33 percent of those 35-44. The youngest age groups also strongly favored the government focusing on providing healthcare coverage for all Americans and eliminating diseases over providing a Medicare drug benefit for seniors.

A look at the average prescription co-pay revealed that 42 percent of respondents were paying \$10.00 or less for the average prescription. Twenty-eight percent reported they were paying between \$11.00 and \$20.00. Eleven percent of respondents said they had no prescription drug coverage.

#### What Services Should Pharmacies Provide

Cholesterol testing was once again at the top of a list of health services respondents said they would most like to see in their local pharmacies, with nearly one-third selecting this as their first choice. Next was diabetes testing, chosen by 25 percent of those surveyed. The third and fourth most popular health services were disease control information (13 percent) and dietary or weight counseling (12 percent).

When presented with a list of other services that could be offered by local pharmacies, health infomercials trounced other options, such as free food and exercise classes. Twenty-nine percent of respondents preferred to watch TV while waiting for prescriptions to be filled. Free coffee, snacks and refreshments tied with exercise classes for second place, at 17 percent, while contests and prize drawings, and gourmet take-out food landed at the bottom -- at seven percent and four percent, respectively.

Despite the perceived convenience of staying in your car to pick up a prescription refill, drive-thru pharmacy windows do not appear to be a big draw for the majority of survey respondents. Forty-six percent of those surveyed said they would not use a drive-thru window at all for prescription refills. Just over one-third said they would use it "all the time," while 14 percent said they would use it only in inclement weather.

On another convenience question, the majority of respondents (52 percent) said their physician's office was the easiest place for them to go for immunizations. Pharmacies came in next at 21 percent, followed by outpatient clinics at 18 percent, and hospitals at seven percent.

#### Mail Order Use Differs by Region

Nineteen percent of respondents say that they have used mail order to renew prescriptions. Mail order usage was fairly consistent among respondents from the North Central, South, and West Regions of the United States, with 22 percent, 20 percent, and 23 percent respectively responding that they have used mail order to renew prescriptions. However, only 12 percent of the respondents from the Northeast region of the US said that they have used mail order.

When asked who they would consult with questions about medications if they were to use mail order for refills, more than half the respondents (51 percent) said they would consult their physicians. Twenty-six percent said they would call their local pharmacist if they had questions or concerns about prescription refills, even though the prescription was filled elsewhere. Only six percent said they would contact the mail order service -- a response that came in just above "friends and family" (5 percent), continuing to demonstrate the importance of the local pharmacist.

#### About the AmerisourceBergen Index

The AmerisourceBergen Index is a quarterly survey of trends, purchasing behaviors and opinions about pharmacists and their customers. The first survey was conducted in May 2001.

#### About AmerisourceBergen

AmerisourceBergen (NYSE: ABC) is the largest pharmaceutical services company in the United States dedicated solely to the pharmaceutical supply

chain. It is the leading distributor of pharmaceutical products and services to the hospital systems/acute care market, alternate care and mail order facilities, independent community pharmacies, and regional chain pharmacies. The Company is also a leader in the institutional pharmacy marketplace. With more than \$39 billion in annualized operating revenue, AmerisourceBergen is headquartered in Valley Forge, PA, and employs more than 13,000 people serving over 25,000 customers.

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CONTACT: Michael N. Kilpatric of AmerisourceBergen, +1-610-727-7118 or +1-610-727-7119, or [mkilpatric@amerisource.com](mailto:mkilpatric@amerisource.com); or Iris Raylesberg of Kapnek Communications, +1-215-830-9890, or [iris@kapnek.com](mailto:iris@kapnek.com), for AmerisourceBergen (ABC)