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What Do Consumers Want in the Pharmacy of the Future

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VALLEY FORGE, Pa., April 30 /PRNewswire/ -- What should the drug store of the future offer its customers?

On-site nurse practitioners were the top choice, according to the AmeriSource Index, a new nationwide quarterly survey released today by AmeriSource Health Corporation (NYSE: AAS). The survey covered a range of topics including purchasing medications over the Internet, the use of herbal medicines, why people use a particular pharmacy and whom people go to for advice on medications.

When presented with a list of products and services that they would most like to find in the pharmacy of the future, 30 percent of respondents chose an on-site nurse practitioner. When asked what their second top choice was, nutrition counseling and a nurse practitioner tied at 15 percent. A specialist on different diseases came in next, at 14 percent. Other top contenders for second place were kiosks with medical or diagnostic information, at 12 percent, and weight loss counseling, at 8 percent. Chiropractors and masseuses followed, with 7 percent and 5 percent respectively.

What About the Internet?

While Internet purchases have increased in recent years, the vast majority of survey respondents -- 64 percent -- said they had not purchased medications over the Internet and did not intend to do so in the future. However, when asked what might encourage them to do so, the ability to order from a local pharmacy on-line drew the largest number of responses -- 21 percent. Next were lower prices (20 percent), convenience and improved security (12 percent), at-home delivery of orders (10 percent) and obtaining Internet access (3 percent).

Waiting to have a prescription filled was an experience just about all respondents shared. Twenty-nine percent of those surveyed reported an average wait of more than 20 minutes. Eighteen percent said they usually waited 11-15 minutes, while 19 percent said they waited 6-10 minutes. Only 13 percent of respondents reported waiting five minutes or less.

The AmeriSource Index polled 1,034 consumers nationwide about their medication-purchasing habits and preferences. It was conducted by Opinion Research Corporation International on behalf of AmeriSource Health Corporation, a leading distributor of pharmaceutical and related healthcare products and services.

Choosing a Pharmacy

What is the most important factor in selecting a pharmacy? A convenient location, according to 26 percent of the survey respondents. Low prices came in next, at 20 percent, followed by "trust" and "personalized attention and service" at 15 percent.

Among respondents 55 and over, who purchase more medications than any other group, the results were different. Trust ranked even higher among respondents 55-64. In fact, 23 percent said this was their top criterion. Among senior citizens (64+), personal attention also ranked high, with 20 percent of seniors selecting this as the key reason to choose a pharmacy.

Pharmacists also ranked second only to physicians when people seek advice about medications or medication interactions, according to the survey. When asked whom they were most likely to consult about these issues, 48 percent of respondents chose physicians, while 37 percent chose pharmacists. Among adults 35 to 64 years of age, pharmacists were the top choice, while women were almost evenly split, with 45 percent choosing physicians and 44 percent selecting pharmacists.

Lastly, the survey questioned people about their use of herbal and homeopathic medicines. While 27 percent of respondents said they did take these products, nearly two thirds of those who reported using herbal or homeopathic products said they did not inform their pharmacists about it. Herbal and homeopathic products were used most by adults ages 35-54. This group was also the least likely to inform pharmacists about the use of these products.

The AmeriSource Index

The first AmeriSource Index, released today, is a quarterly survey of trends, purchasing behaviors and opinions about pharmacists and their customers. Future surveys will be released on a quarterly basis.

About AmeriSource

AmeriSource Health Corporation (NYSE: AAS), with approximately \$14 billion in annualized operating revenue, is a leading distributor of pharmaceutical and related healthcare products and services, and the industry's largest provider of pharmaceuticals to the acute care/health systems market. Headquartered in Valley Forge, PA, the Company serves its base of about 15,000 customers accounts through a national network of more than 20 strategically located distribution facilities. For news and additional information about the company, visit its web site at www.amerisource.com.

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