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Majority of U.S. Consumers and Healthcare Professionals Not Worried About Contracting Ebola Virus According to WebMD/Medscape Survey

NEW YORK, Nov. 3, 2014 /PRNewswire/ -- According to a new survey released today from WebMD (NASDAQ: WBMD), the leading source of health information, when it comes to Ebola, nearly three-quarters of American consumers and healthcare professionals say they're not worried about catching the disease. But less than half of respondents believe the U.S. health care system is prepared to manage an Ebola outbreak, should one occur.

More than 2,000 consumers and healthcare professionals responded to the WebMD/Medscape Ebola survey, which included responses from 1,058 healthcare professionals including, physicians, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants. Of the 1,280 consumers who responded, approximately 60% were parents and half reported having a college degree or higher level of education.

"Despite a 24/7 news cycle about crises, outbreaks, travel bans and quarantines, the majority of Americans are aware that the risk to the general public of contracting Ebola in the United States is very low," says Michael W. Smith, MD, WebMD chief medical editor.

Support for Protective Measures

While three-quarters of survey respondents are not worried about catching the disease, there was widespread support among consumers and professionals to enact screenings, flight restrictions, and quarantines as reasonable responses to prevent the spread of the virus in the U.S.

Below are some of the key findings:

- Eighty-four percent of consumers and 89% of healthcare professionals support the screening of passengers arriving from areas affected by Ebola.
- Sixty-nine percent of consumers and 52% of healthcare professionals say it is reasonable to stop flights from affected areas from landing in the U.S. until Ebola outbreaks are under control.
- Fifty-seven percent of consumers and 56% of health care professionals are in favor of quarantining visitors from affected countries until certain they are not affected by Ebola.

Preparation Among Healthcare Professionals

Despite half of healthcare professionals feeling that the U.S. public health system is not prepared to respond to or manage an Ebola outbreak, the majority feels prepared to handle Ebola when it comes to their own practice setting.

- Sixty-three percent of healthcare professionals report their practice, department, or hospital is prepared to treat a person with Ebola symptoms.
- Ninety-seven percent of healthcare professionals say they are familiar with the symptoms of Ebola.
- Eighty-two percent of healthcare professionals say they've reviewed CDC recommendations on symptoms for Ebola.

Health Care Professionals: Influenza and Enterovirus Pose Greater Threats

According to the CDC, the number of people who die each year from flu-related causes in the U.S. ranges from 3,000 to 49,000. Also, state public-health labs have confirmed more than 970 cases of enterovirus D68. These statistics provide context in comparison to confirmed U.S. Ebola cases. When asked what type of threat each poses to public health, healthcare professionals are in agreement that influenza and enterovirus pose higher risks to the population, with 69% of healthcare professionals viewing influenza as a high threat to public health, compared to 17% who rank Ebola as a high threat. Enterovirus D68 ranks as a high threat by 33% of healthcare professionals.

To view WebMD's and Medscape's coverage of the Ebola survey, visit:

WebMD

<http://www.webmd.com/news/20141031/survey-reveals-concerns-over-ebola>

Medscape

<http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/834146>

Consumer video:

WebMD Asks About Ebola

Dr. Anthony Fauci Answers Questions From the WebMD Audience

<http://www.webmd.com/a-to-z-guides/fauci-on-ebola>

Health care professionals who would like to view videos regarding appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE) can view video instructions from the CDC.

<http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/833907>

WebMD/Medscape Ebola Survey Methods

WebMD Consumer Survey

The WebMD Consumer Survey on the Ebola virus was completed by 1,280 randomly served WebMD site visitors (61% desktop, 39% mobile) from Oct. 20-26, 2014. The sample represents the [WebMD.com](http://www.webmd.com) online population with a margin of error of $\pm 2.8\%$ at a 95% confidence level, using a point estimate (a statistic) of 50%, given a binomial distribution.

Medscape Health Care Professional

The Health Care Practitioner Survey on the Ebola virus was completed by 1,058 clinicians who are active on Medscape. The survey was fielded Oct. 18-22, 2014, via email invitation to include physicians (n=657), physician assistants (n=82), nurse practitioners (n=182), and registered nurses (n=139). Specialty practice areas relevant to the survey topic were targeted, with most respondents coming from emergency medicine (n=233), family medicine (n=258), internal medicine (n=183), and pediatric medicine (n=156). The remaining respondents (n=228) were distributed among the full range of specialties. The margin of error for this sample is $\pm 3.06\%$, at a 95% confidence level, using a point estimate (a statistic) of 50%, given a binomial distribution.

About WebMD and Medscape

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