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## **WebMD/Medscape Survey Finds Room for Improvement in Communicating Cancer Risk**

### **Consumers and Health Care Professionals Differ on the Clarity, Comprehensiveness, and Proactive Nature of Current Discussion**

NEW YORK, Oct. 25, 2016 /PRNewswire/ -- While a majority of health care professionals say they discuss steps their patients can take to lower their risk of cancer, fewer than one-third of patients say those discussions have taken place, according to the results of a newly released WebMD/Medscape survey on consumer and health care professional attitudes toward cancer prevention. The survey was developed as part of WebMD/Medscape's public commitment to Vice President Biden's Cancer Moonshot initiative.

The survey of 1,508 WebMD visitors and 754 primary care health care professionals (physicians, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants) examines how both groups perceive cancer risk, prevention, and levels of research funding. It also looks at what preventive steps consumers take, or are advised by health care professionals to take, to lower their cancer risk.

For additional information on the results, visit <http://www.webmd.com/cancer/news/20161025/webmd-cancer-prevention-survey> or <http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/870857>

The survey findings come on the heels of Vice President Joe Biden's Cancer Moonshot report to President Barack Obama, in which he outlined steps needed to move toward a cancer cure. Those steps include increased emphasis on cancer prevention and screening and additional funding for research.

#### **Are Cancer Prevention Discussions Happening?**

The WebMD/Medscape survey found that only 27% of consumers could recall their health care professional broaching a cancer prevention discussion, even though more than 70% of health care professionals say that they do. This gap is particularly wide with respect to discussions on family history and vaccinations for hepatitis B and human papillomavirus (HPV), which are known to prevent liver and cervical cancer, respectively. Only 25% of consumers say their health care professional discussed the hepatitis B and HPV vaccines, versus 70% of health care professionals. A gap also exists regarding discussions of family history of cancer, with 90% of professionals indicating they discussed it with patients versus 57% of consumers.

These differences may point to the way in which the prevention discussion is framed. If too general, patients may not realize that the information about losing weight and exercising, for example, pertains to lowering their cancer risk. Regardless of perception, 71% of consumers say they do take steps to reduce their risk, such as quitting smoking, having an annual wellness exam, limiting alcohol, exercising, and wearing sunscreen, with or without recalling that their health care professional advised that they do.

With regard to preventive screenings, the majority of consumers (96%) surveyed said they undergo colonoscopies, mammograms, and other tests when recommended by their health care professional. A small percentage (4%) resist due to such reasons as the embarrassing and uncomfortable nature of the tests. Others disagreed that they needed the tests.

#### **Cancer's Personal Impact**

Cancer has touched the lives of a wide majority of consumers responding, with 79% indicating that the disease was diagnosed in a close family member, including 47% of parents. While more than half of the consumers surveyed (56%) believed that too few resources are directed to finding a cancer cure, only 39% of health care professionals agreed.

The discrepancy may point to a difference in the perception of "cure," with consumers envisioning a "cure for cancer" as a silver bullet-type treatment. Health care professionals may believe that research will instead lead to strides in more effective therapies and improved prevention and screening strategies.

"Information can be a powerful tool in the fight against cancer," said Steven L. Zatz, MD, WebMD's CEO. "The findings of our WebMD/Medscape Cancer Prevention Survey underscore the need for more communication between health professionals and patients regarding factors that increase the risk of cancer. WebMD and Medscape are committed to the goals of the Cancer Moonshot initiative -- raising awareness, informing and educating on the topics of cancer prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and survivorship to consumers, patients, physicians, and health care professionals."

### **WebMD Medscape/Cancer Prevention Survey Methods**

#### ***Consumers***

WebMD's Consumer Cancer Prevention Survey was completed by 1,508 random U.S. desktop and mobile WebMD site visitors on September 21-30, 2016. All visitors had an equal probability of answering the survey. The sample represents the [WebMD.com](http://www.webmd.com) online population, with a margin of error of  $\pm 2.55\%$  at a 95% confidence level, using a point estimate (a statistic) of 50%, given a binomial distribution.

#### ***Primary Health Care Professionals***

Medscape's Clinician Cancer Prevention Survey was completed by 754 primary care clinicians who have been active on Medscape in the past 12 months. The survey was fielded September 21 - October 5, 2016 via email invitation, resulting in 574 physicians, 100 nurse practitioners, and 80 physician assistants who responded to the survey. Physician assistants and nurse practitioners were quota sampled to obtain approximately 100 of each group. Among primary care physicians, 243 specialize in family practice, 191 in internal medicine, and 140 in obstetrics/gynecology. For nurse practitioners, 55 state they are in family practice, 27 internal medicine, and 18 in obstetrics/gynecology. Most of the physician assistants sampled say they are in family practice (63), with 15 stating internal medicine and 2 selecting obstetrics/gynecology.

This sample represents the described Medscape active clinicians in primary care with a margin of error for physicians of  $\pm 4.17\%$ , at a 95% confidence level, using a point estimate (a statistic) of 50%, given a binomial distribution. For nurse practitioners, the parallel margin of error is  $\pm 10.17\%$ , and for physician assistants it is  $\pm 11.39\%$ .

#### **About WebMD**

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