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New Surveys from Stop Obesity Alliance Show Primary Care Doctors and Patients See Shared Role in Weight Loss, But Ask, Now What?

17th U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Richard H. Carmona and Alliance Also Release White Paper Examining Innovative Approaches to Help Address Obesity Within Primary Care

WASHINGTON, D.C., March 16, 2010 - Primary care physicians agree they have a role in addressing obesity, but say they do not have the right weight management resources. Obese or heavier adults take responsibility for weight loss, but adults who need to lose weight may lack information about effective weight loss methods and strategies. These findings and others come from new research commissioned and released today by the Strategies to Overcome and Prevent (STOP) Obesity Alliance.

In a national survey of 290 primary care physicians conducted by Harris Interactive® by mail between September 1 and December 21, 2009, 89 percent of primary care physicians believe it is their responsibility to help overweight or obese patients lose weight, but 72 percent of those surveyed also said that no one in their practice has been trained to deal with weight-related issues.

"We're not surprised most primary care providers say more time would help them discuss weight with patients. Yet, even if they had those precious extra minutes, many would still be missing needed information about weight-loss tools and existing programs," explained Dr. Richard H. Carmona, 17th U.S. Surgeon General, Health and Wellness Chairperson of the STOP Obesity Alliance and President of Canyon Ranch Institute. "It's time to fill that information gap."

A separate companion national telephone survey conducted by Harris Interactive® of 1,002 U.S. adults conducted between September 1 and November 23, 2009, indicates that most recognize the impact of excess weight on health and that most obese or heavier adults, according to body mass index (BMI) calculations, take personal responsibility for losing weight. At the same time, only 39 percent of those with a BMI of 30 or above - the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute's measure of obesity for both adult men and women - said they had ever been told by a health care professional that they were obese. Among U.S. adults informed of their obesity, close to 9 out of 10 said their health care professional recommended that they lose weight. However, of the U.S. adults who were told by a health care professional to lose weight, about one in three said their physicians never discussed how.

Findings across both surveys also indicate that physicians and patients agree that establishing the goal of a 5-10 percent weight loss would benefit overall health. Eighty percent of patients who consider themselves overweight or obese and 91 percent of physicians agree that the risk of disease is reduced a great deal or somewhat following a weight loss of 5-10 percent.

"Patients are frustrated from previous failed weight loss attempts and need realistic definitions of success that focus on health. Establishing 5-10 percent weight loss as a starting point for success could result in improved weight management outcomes," said Christine Ferguson, J.D., STOP Obesity Alliance Director and research professor at The George Washington University Department of Health Policy.

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The Alliance also released a new white paper highlighting innovative approaches to help address obesity within primary care. The paper stemmed from an expert roundtable organized by the Alliance that focused on adult primary care treatment and management of obesity. The paper outlines five areas to explore to improve the treatment of obesity in primary care that could lead to significant advancements in patient outcomes: 1) monitoring weight, health indicators and risk; 2) assessing patient motivation; 3) defining success; 4) increasing integration and care coordination; and 5) implementing electronic medical records.

Roundtable attendees included leading health experts, academics and medical providers from leading organizations such as American College of Sports Medicine, American Heart Association, American Medical Group Association, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service, Geisinger Health System, Harvard University, Holston Medical Group, Obesity Action Coalition, The Obesity Society, Society for Women's Health Research, University of Maryland and The University of Vermont.

"We're dealing with a multi-factorial health condition that is challenging to those who suffer from it and those who treat it," Dr. Carmona said. "These STOP Obesity Alliance findings support the need to address America's obesity epidemic with a range of solutions that motivate and engage both health care professionals and patients in setting and achieving realistic goals related to weight."

About the STOP Obesity Alliance

The Strategies to Overcome and Prevent (STOP) Obesity Alliance is a collaboration of consumer, provider, government, labor, business, health insurers and quality-of-care organizations united to drive innovative and practical strategies that combat obesity. The STOP Obesity Alliance is directed by Research Professor Christine C. Ferguson, J.D., of The George Washington University's Department of Health Policy and former Health Commissioner for the State of Massachusetts. Richard H. Carmona, M.D., M.P.H., FACS, 17th U.S. Surgeon General and President of the non-profit Canyon Ranch Institute, serves as Health and Wellness Chairperson of the Alliance. The Alliance Steering Committee is comprised of the following public and private sector organizations: American Diabetes Association, American Heart Association, America's Health Insurance Plans, American Medical Group Association, Canyon Ranch Institute, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity (DNPAO), DMAA: The Care Continuum Alliance, National Business Group on Health, National Quality Forum, Partnership for Prevention, Reality Coalition, Service Employees International Union, The Obesity Society and Trust for America's Health. The Strategies to Overcome and Prevent (STOP) Obesity Alliance receives funding from founding sponsor, sanofi-aventis U.S. LLC, and supporting sponsors, Allergan, Inc. and Amylin Pharmaceuticals, Inc. For more information, visit www.stopobesityalliance.org.

Survey Methodology

This obesity study was conducted by Harris Interactive® on behalf of the Strategies to Overcome and Prevent (STOP) Obesity Alliance between September 1 and November 23, 2009 via telephone among 1,002 adults including 236 adults with a body mass index (BMI) ≥ 30 who are living in private households in the continental United States and between September 1 and December 21, 2009 among 290 primary care physicians. A full methodology is available including weighting variables. Please contact Celesta Cheo of Harris Interactive® at CCheo@HarrisInteractive.com.