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Surgeon General Joins with National Consumers League to Launch Medication Adherence Awareness Campaign

Three out of four Americans fail to take prescribed medicine as directed, putting health at risk; new national multi-stakeholder campaign encourages conversations between health care professionals, patients

Washington, D.C.—Today the National Consumers League (NCL) launches a new public education campaign, *Script Your Future*, to raise awareness among patients about the consequences of not taking medication as directed. Three out of four Americans are non-adherent, meaning that they fail to take prescribed medicines as directed by their health care professionals.

“There are many different reasons why people don’t take their medicine as directed, from concerns about side effects to the out-of-pocket costs of prescriptions. But the consequences for patients are the same. Non-adherence puts patients, especially those with chronic conditions, at risk for serious complications,” said Sally Greenberg, executive director of NCL, the nation’s oldest consumer group.

The U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. Regina M. Benjamin, helped kick off the campaign at The George Washington University Hospital, calling America’s medication adherence problem a public health concern, significant enough to warrant the widespread interest of health care stakeholders that resulted in the launch of *Script Your Future*.

Medication adherence is part of the Surgeon General’s Prevention Focus. “Our national challenge is to prevent poor health outcomes and to become a healthy and fit nation. One way is for the health care community and patients to come together to address the serious issue of medication non-adherence,” said Dr. Benjamin. “As a family physician, I know that conversations between clinicians and their patients are key to patients understanding why taking their medication correctly is so important, particularly in chronic health conditions such as diabetes, asthma and high blood pressure. The tools offered through NCL’s *Script Your Future* campaign empower patients to talk with their health care teams about their medication questions and concerns.”

The centerpiece of the first-of-its-kind, multi-year campaign is a website, www.ScriptYourFuture.org, which provides tools to support patient efforts to adhere to their prescribed medicine. Tools include free text message reminders, sample questions, medication lists and charts to keep track of medicines, and fact sheets on common chronic conditions such as diabetes, asthma and high blood pressure. A companion campaign site with adherence tools for health care professionals, www.ScriptYourFuture.org/HCP, was launched in March.

(More)

Script Your Future is supported by a coalition of nearly 100 public and private partners and sponsors, including health care professional groups, chronic disease groups, health insurance plans, pharmaceutical companies, business organizations, consumer groups, as well as researchers and government agencies.

The campaign was informed by research outlined in a new briefing paper, “Medication Adherence: Making the Case for Increased Awareness,” co-authored by Hayden B. Bosworth at Duke University Medical Center, and the National Consumers League. Bosworth is a research partner in the national effort and is based in Durham, N.C., one of six regional city markets where the campaign will pilot campaign activities, research and advertising. The other regional markets are Baltimore, Md.; Birmingham, Ala.; Cincinnati, Ohio; Providence, R.I.; and Sacramento, Calif.

The briefing paper defines medication adherence and reviews specific research on the problems that occur with non-adherence; the growing focus on the issue by both the U.S. and global health communities; and the qualitative research commissioned by the National Consumers League that informed the *Script Your Future* campaign.

“Poor medication adherence is costing Americans their good health, and is costing our nation an estimated \$290 billion each year in avoidable healthcare costs,” said Steven C. Anderson, IOM, CAE, chairman of the Board of the National Association of Chain Drug Stores Foundation. “Improved adherence will contribute to lower overall health care costs and increased quality of life. *Script Your Future* focuses national attention on this issue and helps pharmacists and other health care professionals support consumers in taking their medications as prescribed.”

Throughout the next three years, the campaign will provide materials through partnerships with pharmacies, hospitals, medical offices and clinics, and health insurance plans; host community events and health fairs; and evaluate medication adherence awareness through research.

To learn more about the campaign, view campaign advertising and materials, and the briefing paper, “Medication Adherence: Making the Case for Increased Awareness,” please go to www.ScriptYourFuture.org.

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Script Your Future is a campaign of the National Consumers League (NCL), a private, non-profit membership organization founded in 1899. Our mission is to protect and promote social and economic justice for consumers and workers in the United States and abroad. The National Consumers League serves consumers across the country by providing government, businesses and other organizations with the consumer’s perspective on a range of concerns – including health care and medication information. As an advocacy organization, NCL is working to educate consumers and key health stakeholders on the importance of taking medication as directed. For more information about this campaign, visit www.ScriptYourFuture.org, and for more information on our other areas of focus, please visit www.nclnet.org.