



Understanding Trust in OTC Medicines: Consumer and Healthcare Provider Perspectives

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I. OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDICINES TODAY:

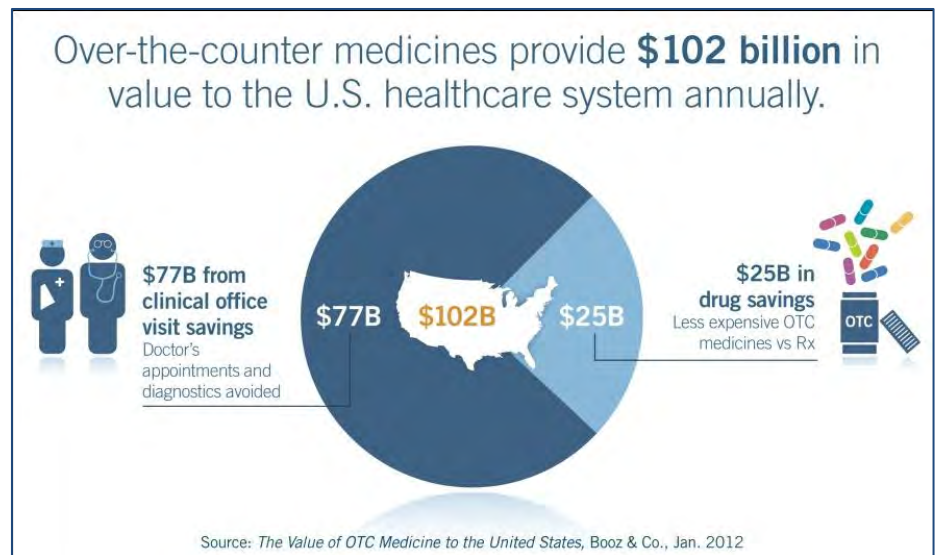
Value, Savings, and Self-Care Trends

Non-prescription, or over-the-counter (OTC), medicines are a vital component of our nation's healthcare system. These are the medicines and products consumers often turn to first when illness strikes, whether to relieve their symptoms in the middle of the night or during the work or school day. Yet despite Americans' everyday reliance on these safe and effective treatments and products, the average consumer – as well as policymakers, healthcare professionals and the public health community – may not fully recognize the important role OTC medicines play in innovating healthcare, empowering consumers, addressing the nation's looming physician shortage, and delivering critical healthcare cost savings. A growing body of research on the impact and value of OTC medicines indicates it is time for the experts and consumers alike to consider the importance of these important treatment options in order to maximize their potential to reduce healthcare costs and expand self-care in America.

The Bigger OTC Picture

Previous research on OTC medicines has revealed that, on average, physicians report that more than one out of 10 office visits result from minor ailments that could be self-managed by patients, including by the use of OTC medicines.ⁱ This amounts to tens of millions of unnecessary treatments each year that could be avoided. By empowering consumers to safely and effectively treat a range of minor ailments through self-care, OTC medicines also relieve the burden on physicians, helping to address our country's looming primary care physician shortage; soon to soar as millions more Americans acquire healthcare coverage.

Overall, the availability of OTC medicine in the categories analyzed in a 2012 Booz & Co. study, *The Value of OTC Medicines to the United States*ⁱⁱ, found that OTC medicines provide significant value for the U.S. healthcare system – \$102 billion in annual savings relative to alternatives – and increase consumer access to treatment. This figure includes \$77 billion in savings from doctor's appointments and diagnostics avoided and \$25 billion in drug cost savings, comparing lower priced OTC medicines to higher priced prescription medicines. On average, every dollar spent by consumers on OTC medicines saves \$6-7 for the U.S. healthcare system as a whole.



The Current Role of OTC Medicines

Over the last few decades, the variety of OTC treatments available to consumers has expanded significantly. In fact, more than 700 OTC products on the market today use ingredients or dosages that were once available only by prescription. In March 2012 the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) held a public hearing to discuss the future of OTC medicines and explore a new "prescription-to-OTC switch" paradigm, stating: "Getting medicines into the hands of consumers has become troublesome over the last few years. Research shows that for a variety of reasons, 20 percent of patients with prescriptions do not get them filled. In addition, the time or cost required visiting a doctor to receive a prescription or refill often stops patients. FDA thinks that some of these doctor visits can be eliminated. It is exploring ways to make drugs for common conditions available as nonprescription products."ⁱⁱⁱ Addressing the need to empower

consumers' ability to manage their healthcare through a range of treatment options, including OTC medicines, is an important issue for policymakers and other stakeholders.

Recent research captures the importance of OTC medicines to consumers. In fact, the 2012 Booz & Co. study found that the availability of OTC medicines provides symptomatic relief for an estimated 60 million people who otherwise would not seek treatment.^{iv} A 2011 survey, *Perceptions of Over-the-Counter Medicine in the U.S.*, revealed that 89 percent of consumers believe OTC medicines are an important part of their overall family healthcare.^v A 2013 survey from Edelman Berland, *Unlocking America's Medicine Cabinet*, reinforces this statistic, finding that nine out of 10 Americans say that OTC medicines are an important part of their family healthcare.^{vi}

The data unveiled in this report builds upon these insights with findings from a new survey conducted by Nielsen and IMS, *Understanding Trust in OTC Medicines: Consumer and Healthcare Provider Perspectives*, on behalf of the Consumer Healthcare Products Association. The survey examines two important stakeholder groups – consumers and healthcare providers – and analyzes what drives these groups' use and trust in OTC medicines.

II. Understanding Trust in OTC Medicines: Consumer and Healthcare Provider Perspectives

Introduction

To gain new insights on the issue of what drives trust in OTC medicines, Nielsen and IMS partnered to conduct surveys of consumers (Nielsen) and healthcare providers (IMS) to understand what leads both groups to trust OTC medicines. Both survey designs measured relative importance of potential trust attributes, or drivers. Respondents spent approximately five minutes answering profiling questions, followed by approximately five minutes of an exercise where they looked at 12 sets of four attributes that were repeated in different patterns to result in an overall relative ranking of 20 attributes of trust.

Consumer Findings

Overall Consumer Trust

We know that consumers today have an abundance of choices when it comes to OTC medicines, however, the Nielsen survey revealed that the most important factors in determining consumers' trust in an OTC medicine are that the medicine will work for them, will be as effective as a prescription, does not have many side effects, and is recommended by their doctor.

Consumer Preference and Behavior

The survey found that the majority of consumers prefer using OTC medicines versus a prescription. In fact, more than two-thirds of consumers surveyed prefer to use OTC medicines instead of a prescription when the OTC is available.

OTC medicines enable consumers to treat themselves when minor illness or injury occurs, allowing them to avoid an unnecessary doctor's visit. According to the research, 61 percent of consumers surveyed visit a healthcare provider just one to two times a year. Yet, the

average U.S. household reports four to five instances of cold and flu and three-to-four instances of heartburn each year.^{vii} This finding suggests that, for a range of illnesses, consumers rely on OTC medicines to relieve their symptoms, without having to see a healthcare professional. In fact, in four major categories of symptoms, consumers use OTC medicines for relief without seeing a healthcare professional: cough, cold, flu, or sinus relief – 84 percent; pain relief – 82 percent; upset stomach/acid reflux relief – 77 percent; and allergy relief – 75 percent.

Consumers **trust** over-the-counter medicines for **themselves and their children.**

My OTC Checklist:

- Will work for me
- Will be as effective as a prescription
- Does not have many side effects
- Is recommended by my doctor

Source: *Understanding Trust in Over-the-Counter Medicines: Consumer and Healthcare Provider Perspectives*, Nielsen and IMS, Mar. 2013

Consumers **are knowledgeable** about selecting over-the-counter medicines.

- Choose**
OTC based on the symptoms it treats
- Trust**
doctor's advice on OTCs
- Prefer**
OTC to Rx when available

Source: *Understanding Trust in Over-the-Counter Medicines: Consumer and Healthcare Provider Perspectives*, Nielsen and IMS, Mar. 2013

The Knowledgeable Consumer

According to the research, most consumers are knowledgeable about selecting the appropriate OTC medicine to treat their own symptoms. Nearly two-thirds of consumers report that they understand what the ingredients in different OTC medicines do, which leaves both a responsibility and opportunity for industry and regulators to continue to educate the remaining public about OTC medicines, especially how and why to read and follow the Drug Facts label, which lists active ingredients. Furthermore, when it comes to choosing an OTC medicine, 89 percent of consumers choose which OTC medicine to buy based on the symptoms it treats. This is particularly true for allergy symptoms. The research found that the availability of OTC allergy medicine is especially important to consumers surveyed, 90 percent of whom report that they readily or occasionally use OTC allergy medicine to alleviate their symptoms.

Consumer Trust Insights by Demographic

The survey examined trust factors among certain consumer demographics, including U.S. households with children. For households with children under 4 years old, the most important trust attribute in deciding which OTC medicine to take or give to a child is that the medication is recommended by their doctor. Further, members of households with children under 4 years old are more likely to see a healthcare provider for relief of symptoms from colds, flu, fevers, or coughs as compared to other consumers. Additionally, members of households with kids under 12 years old are more likely to “almost always turn to the Internet to diagnose my/others symptoms.”

The findings also revealed that one in four respondents identified themselves as being someone “others often ask for advice on what OTC medicines they should take.” These individuals can be considered “Family Health Influencers” for their knowledge about OTC medicines and the role they take in educating others.

These “Family Health Influencers” can be defined as consumers who are more likely to report that they understand what the ingredients in different OTC medicines do, know what OTC medicines to take or give to others, avoid going to the doctor unless they absolutely have to, and almost always turn to the Internet to diagnose their symptoms or others’ symptoms.



“Family Health Influencers” also report that they trust their doctor’s advice on what OTC medicine they should take or give to others, choose which OTC medicine to buy based on the symptoms it treats and, when it is available, prefer to use an OTC instead of a prescription medicine.

“Family Health Influencers” are more likely to be women – and many are mothers. The research indicates that “Family Health Influencers” rely on OTC medicines as an important treatment option, finding that 86 percent report they readily or occasionally use OTC medicine to alleviate symptoms.

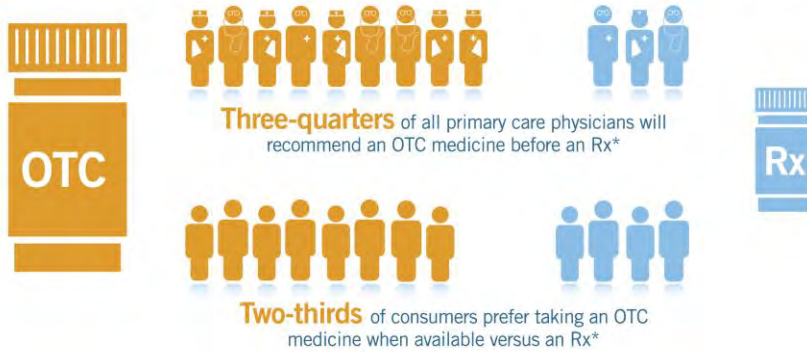
In addition, the survey also found that multigenerational households, Hispanic households, and households who care for an adult outside of their home place a high value on pharmacist or in-store healthcare professional recommendations. Multigenerational households are more likely to trust products with easy-to-understand instructions.

Healthcare Provider Findings

Healthcare Provider Trust

The survey found that healthcare providers recommend and trust OTC medicines. Doctors, nurses, and pharmacists have clear-cut criteria for when to trust OTC medicines – they work consistently to alleviate symptoms.

Physicians and consumers agree: Over-the-counter medicines are the preferred first line of treatment.



*For ailments such as allergies, pain, cough and cold, and acid reflux/upset stomach.
Source: *Understanding Trust in Over-the-Counter Medicines: Consumer and Healthcare Provider Perspectives*, Nielsen and IMS, Mar. 2013

When primary care physicians, nurse practitioners, and pharmacists decide what OTC medicine they trust to take themselves or give to their family members, of 20 different criteria, the most important are an OTC medicine they know will achieve successful patient outcomes, work consistently, and be as effective as a prescription.

Healthcare Provider Recommendations
Nearly all healthcare providers surveyed recommend OTC medicines to their patients without reservation. In fact, only about one in 100 healthcare providers express any reluctance

recommending OTC medicines to their patients or caregivers. The findings delved deeper into healthcare provider trust factors in across four specialty areas: primary care physicians, pharmacists, pediatricians, and nurse practitioners.

Primary Care Physician Findings

The survey found that 98 percent of primary care physicians either recommended or had no reservations recommending OTC medicines to their patients. In fact, nearly three-fourths of primary care physicians will recommend OTC medicines to relieve symptoms before recommending a prescription treatment.

Specifically, three-fourths of all primary care physicians surveyed will recommend an OTC medicine before a prescription treatment to relieve their patients' symptoms for ailments such as allergies, pain, cough and cold, and acid reflux/upset stomach. For instance, the survey found that 80 percent of primary care physicians will recommend OTC medicines to their patients before recommending a prescription treatment to relieve symptoms of upset stomach/acid reflux.

What drives primary care physicians' trust in OTC medicines?

Of 20 different trust criteria, the most important to primary care physicians are:



*When used and stored as directed, OTC medicines are effective in providing relief for everyday ailments and helping to address personal health and wellness issues.

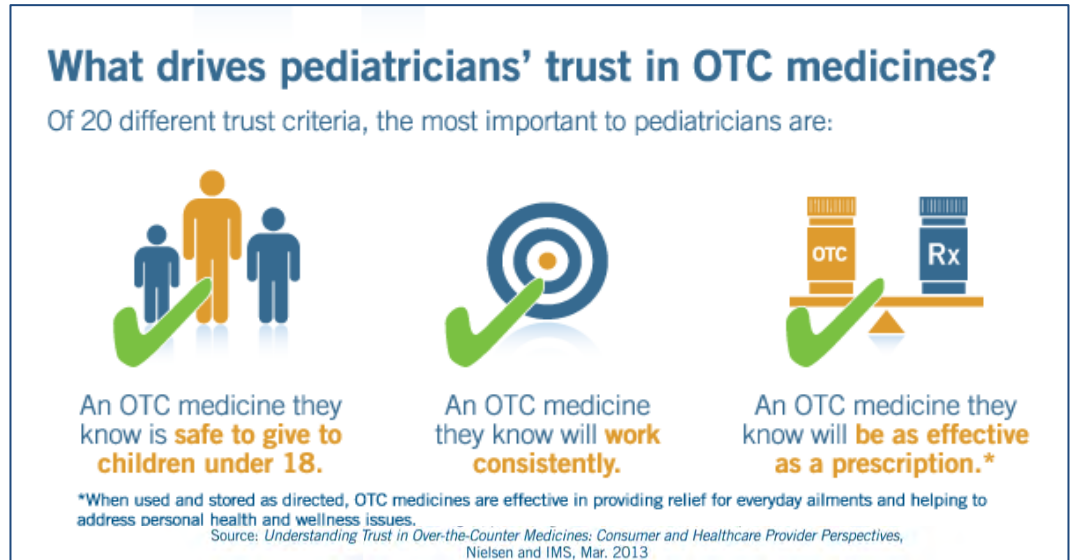
Source: *Understanding Trust in Over-the-Counter Medicines: Consumer and Healthcare Provider Perspectives*, Nielsen and IMS, Mar. 2013

Pharmacist Findings

According to the survey, 97 percent of pharmacists either recommended or had no reservations recommending OTC medicines to their patients, and two-thirds of pharmacists will recommend OTC medicines to relieve symptoms without recommending a prescription treatment. Specifically, nearly six out of 10 pharmacists surveyed will recommend an OTC medicine before a prescription treatment to relieve their patients' symptoms for ailments such as allergies, pain, cough and cold, and acid reflux/upset stomach. The survey also found that eight out of 10 pharmacists surveyed recommend taking OTC medicines and encourage caregivers and patients to read and carefully follow instructions before taking the medicine.

Pediatrician Findings

The survey found that 89 percent of pediatricians either recommended or had no reservations recommending OTC medicines to their patients and 80 percent of pediatricians will recommend OTC medicines to relieve symptoms without recommending a prescription treatment. Specifically, nearly three-fourths of all pediatricians surveyed will recommend an OTC medicine before a prescription treatment to relieve their patients' symptoms for ailments such as allergies, pain, cough and cold, and acid reflux/upset stomach. According to the survey, pediatricians look first and foremost to whether an OTC medicine is safe to give to children under 18 years old when deciding to recommend the medicine.



Nurse Practitioner Findings

The findings also revealed that 98 percent of nurse practitioners either recommended or had no reservations recommending OTC medicines to their patients and nearly seven in 10 nurse practitioners will recommend OTC medicines to relieve symptoms without recommending a prescription treatment. Specifically, more than two-thirds of nurse practitioners surveyed will recommend an OTC medicine before a prescription treatment to relieve their patients' symptoms for ailments such as allergies, pain, cough and cold, and acid reflux/upset stomach.

III. Conclusion

Additional Observations

It is important to note that these findings reveal nearly one-third of the population report that they don't know what the ingredients in OTC medicines do. This leaves an opportunity and a responsibility for industry and regulators to continue innovative educational efforts about OTC medicines to both consumers and healthcare providers.

In addition, the findings show one in four consumers are "Family Health Influencers," who are individuals knowledgeable about OTC medicines and often sought after for advice by others. An important question remains: How do we grow the number of "Family Health Influencers" across the country to ensure more consumers are educated about how to safely and effectively use OTC medicines?

Final Insights

Healthcare providers and consumers agree — OTC medicines are the preferred first line of treatment to alleviate a range of symptoms. Both of these groups revealed that their most important trust drivers include using an OTC medicine they know will work consistently and that an OTC medicine will be as effective as a prescription medicine for treating minor ailments. Where consumers and their primary care practitioners differ is on the relative importance of a greater series of factors that determine trust. Doctors, nurses, and pharmacists have a clearly differentiated "top three" trust factors: They trust OTC medicines they know will achieve successful patient outcomes; they know will work consistently; they know will be as effective as a prescription. However, among consumers, there is less differentiation between the top three factors, suggesting consumers have a more complex equation when considering how they think about trust in OTC medicines, including a medicine not having many side effects and ones that are recommended by their healthcare providers.

As the findings show, OTC medicines are highly trusted as safe and effective treatments for many health issues by consumers, doctors, nurses, and pharmacists alike. The importance of OTC medicines to ensuring a robust self-care environment for individuals and families to effectively manage their day-to-day health, as well as safe and reliable treatments for healthcare providers to recommend to their patients, will only continue as the demand for access to trusted and affordable healthcare options grows.

IV. The Future of Self-Care: OTC Medicine Outlook

By Scott Melville, President and CEO, Consumer Healthcare Products Association

OTC medicines allow millions of Americans to get well, feel well, and stay well, empowering them to take charge of their personal health and the health of their families. They are a trusted first line of treatment for everyday relief, providing consumers with effective solutions to better manage their health by treating their illnesses, alleviating their discomfort, and letting them go about their daily lives. In fact, by keeping the American workforce healthy and at work, research from Booz & Co. found that OTC medicines provide \$23 billion in potential productivity benefits from avoided doctor's office visits and time not having to be away from work.^{viii}

Looking to the future of self-care, we can expect the role of OTC medicines to expand even further as the FDA considers a new "Prescription-to-OTC switch" paradigm that would expand availability of certain OTC medicines. Switching medicines from prescription to OTC status is safe, effective, and can save consumers money and time and expand their access to important medicines. In addition to this movement in the regulatory area, there are several other trends of note that will impact the future of consumer self-care.

Technology is King

Today we're seeing growth in retail use of innovative in-store technology, including kiosks, QR codes, and in-store diagnostics. Beyond reading the package label, consumers are using the Internet and smart phones, apps, and 2D barcodes to access product information to make health and medicine-purchase decisions. With the advent of new technology and an increasingly savvy consumer, we now must look at a more progressive regulatory environment — one that reflects the new decision-making power today's consumers have. The new world of healthcare can and should empower consumers with more tools and new technologies to provide them with information beyond the Drug Facts label and assist them with selecting and using medicines safely.

The Role of the Pharmacist

Over the years, the role of the pharmacist has evolved, and they continue to play an enormous part in the lives of consumers. Evidence of this can be seen in the Nielsen/IMS finding that multigenerational households, Hispanic households, and households who care for an adult outside of their home place a high value on pharmacist or in-store healthcare professional recommendations around how to select and use the OTC medicine right for them. Pharmacists will remain important allies not only for consumers, but for all of us in the healthcare industry.

In the future, our healthcare system will continue to evolve, and we must advance the ideas that make affordable self-care solutions more accessible today than any point in our history — to ensure a future where consumers may continue to reach — in the chill of night, in the haze of dawn, in the congestion of the workday — for OTC medicines and products they trust and rely on.

V. Survey Methodology

Nielsen and IMS partnered to conduct surveys of consumers (Nielsen) and healthcare providers (IMS) to understand what drives both groups to trust OTC medicines.

- The surveys were conducted August 20 – September 10, 2012.
- Total consumer respondents (n=1,194)
 - Hispanic (n=65)
 - Non-Hispanic (n=1,129)
- Total healthcare provider respondents (n=506)
 - Primary care physicians (n=125)
 - Nurse practitioners (n=126)
 - Pediatricians (n=129)
 - Pharmacists (n=126)

For the consumer survey, 1,500 households (HHs) that recorded recent purchases of OTC products on Nielsen’s Homescan Panel were invited to participate. The primary HH shopper was asked to complete the survey for all members of the HH.

Consumer respondents included HHs with the following demographics:

- HHs with kids <4 (n=60)
- HHs with kids 4-11 (n=158)
- HHs with kids 12-17 (n=130)
- Multi-generational HHs (n=39)
- Respondents <65 (n=778)
- Respondents 65+ (n=196)
- Those who care for an adult outside of their home (n= 343)
- Those who purchased an OTC product in the past 6 months (82 percent confirmed)

Both surveys analyzed responses amongst four categories of OTC medicines that were taken, given, or recommended:

- Pain relief
- Cold, cough, sinus, or flu
- Allergy relief
- Upset stomach, acid reflux, or antacids

ⁱ [Your Health at Hand: Perceptions of over-the-counter medicine in the United States](#), StrategyOne for CHPA, November 24, 2010.

ⁱⁱ [The Value of OTC Medicine to the United States](#), Booz & Co., January 2012.

ⁱⁱⁱ [“FDA Considers Expanding Definition of Nonprescription Drugs”](#) Food and Drug Administration, March 2012.

^{iv} [The Value of OTC Medicine to the United States](#), Booz & Co., January 2012.

^v [Your Health at Hand: Perceptions of over-the-counter medicine in the United States](#), StrategyOne for CHPA, November 24, 2010.

^{vi} Unlocking America’s Medicine Cabinet, Edelman Berland, February 1, 2013.

^{vii} 1) Shah, S. A., Sander, S., White, C. M., Rinaldi, M., Coleman, C. I. (2007). “Evaluation of echinacea for the prevention and treatment of the common cold: a meta analysis.” *The Lancet*, 7, 473-480. 2) Rajnik, M. (2012). “Rhinovirus Infection.” *Medscape*. Retrieved from http://emedicine.medscape.com/article/227820-overview_3 Mansfield, J. E., Callahan, D. (2008). “Benefits of Over-the-Counter Heartburn Medication to Consumers and the Healthcare System.” NielsenHealth, Nielsen Company (sponsored by CHPA).

^{viii} [The Value of OTC Medicine to the United States](#), Booz & Co., January 2012.