

Second Opinion

Taking Charge of Your Healthcare 280 State Street, P.O. Box 30021, Rochester, New York 14614

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**MORE THAN ONE IN THREE U.S. ADULTS NEVER GET
A SECOND OPINION FOR A MEDICAL DIAGNOSIS**

*Adults see family/friends and healthcare providers equally
when seeking health-related information*

<http://www.pbs.org/secondopinion/>

Rochester, NY (January 18, 2006)—According to a new survey conducted by Harris Interactive® for the PBS health series *Second Opinion*, when seeing a physician for a medical problem, more than one in three U.S. adults (36%) never get a second opinion for a medical diagnosis and nearly one in ten (9%) rarely or never understand their diagnosis. Commissioned by public broadcaster WXXI and the University of Rochester Medical Center, the series' producers, the survey of over 1,000 U.S. adults was designed to better understand how people communicate with their doctors and what methods are most commonly used to seek health-related information.

“Doctors disagree amongst themselves about almost everything,” says Dr. Peter Salgo, Clinical Professor at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons and host of *Second Opinion*. “Medicine isn’t a ‘diagnosis and treatment machine.’ You don’t put symptoms in the hopper at the top of a box, turn the crank, and get a prescription at the bottom slot. Folks should think about what they need from their doctor, then ask around to be sure they’re getting it.”

(more)

Produced by:



west 175
productions

UNIVERSITY OF
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Dr. Salgo adds, “People worry that docs will be offended if a patient asks for a second opinion. That’s simply not true. In fact, if your doctor seems uncomfortable with your desire to seek a second opinion, you can fire him or her. It’s your body after all, not your doctor’s. Doctors deal with life and death, specifically your life and death. Get it right before you commit to a plan of treatment.”

The survey also revealed that U.S. adults use their friends and family (65%) as much as they do their healthcare providers (65%) to find health-related information. Dr. Louis Papa, M.D., FACP, an Associate Professor of Clinical Medicine at the University of Rochester, says that while it may seem easier to turn to friends and family for health and medical information, it is vitally important to always consult a primary care physician regarding any medical issue or concern—no matter how minor it may seem. “Doctors and patients alike are harried and pressed for time, therefore a discussion with a family member or friend may seem to be the easiest and least threatening approach to a medical concern or question,” Dr. Papa says. “The problem is most family and friends are not medical professionals and base their advice on personal experience rather than objective data, professional training and a detailed history of your health.” Dr. Papa adds, “You wouldn’t want a family member to fly you to Florida. You want a well-trained and experienced pilot and you expect that skill and expertise when you fly. You should certainly expect the same with your health.”

While the survey found little or no statistical differences regarding attitudes and actions among the sexes, the findings revealed that among ethnic groups Hispanics¹ (22%) are twice as likely as Whites (11%) to say they have undergone a medical test they did not fully understand. Geography may also play a role in a person’s healthcare decisions. Adults living in the Northeast (39%) are more likely to seek a second opinion (often or sometimes) than those living in any other region in the United States: North-Central (26%), South (28%), or West (26%).

(more)

¹ Caution small base size—data should be used directionally

Americans can take charge of their own healthcare by knowing what questions to ask their doctor and increasing their general understanding of healthcare issues. The PBS series *Second Opinion* takes viewers behind the scenes to discover first hand how doctors navigate their way through complex medical decisions. Host Dr. Salgo believes the show provides a deeper understanding of modern medicine by illustrating that there are times when even the best doctors cannot fully agree on a course of treatment.

Second Opinion airs on PBS stations nationwide (check local listings) and offers a resource-rich Web site including tips on how to get a second opinion at <http://www.pbs.org/secondopinion> .

Harris Interactive® conducted the telephone survey on behalf of WXXI and the University of Rochester between December 15, and 18, 2005, among a nationwide cross section of 1,032 U.S. adults ages 18 and over. Figures for age, sex, race, and region were weighted where necessary to align them with their actual proportions in the population. In theory, with a probability sample of this size, one can say with 95 percent certainty that the results have a sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points of what they would be if the entire U.S. adult population had been polled with complete accuracy. Sampling error for the subsamples of Hispanics (65), whites (803), and those living in the Northeast (196), South (369), North-central (241) and West (226) is higher and varies.

WXXI produces *Second Opinion* together with West 175 Productions and the University of Rochester Medical Center. National underwriting is provided by the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.

About Harris Interactive® Harris Interactive Inc. (www.harrisinteractive.com), based in Rochester, New York, is the 13th largest and the fastest-growing market research firm in the world, most widely known for *The Harris Poll*® and for its pioneering leadership in the online market research industry. Long recognized by its clients for delivering insights that enable confident business decisions, the Company blends the science of innovative research with the art of strategic consulting to deliver knowledge that leads to measurable and enduring value.

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