

# FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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## **New Survey Finds Majority of Americans in Pain; Acute Pain Sufferers Reluctant to Treat**

*New Harris Survey finds that under-treated and untreated acute pain impacts productivity and quality of life for those who suffer*

**Englewood, CO – January 23, 2008** – While the majority of Americans in a national survey released today reported experiencing pain in the past 12 months,<sup>1</sup> many, especially acute pain sufferers, are reluctant to seek professional help or take prescription pills.<sup>2</sup> More than one-quarter of respondents in acute pain did not see a doctor because they thought they could “tough it out,” and the majority of those who did eventually see a doctor delayed going. Such behaviors are detrimental, however, because for most Americans pain is more than uncomfortable – it is disruptive to their daily activities and work lives and may lead to a chronic medical condition.<sup>2,3</sup>

In the Harris Interactive survey, sponsored by the National Pain Foundation (NPF) through a grant from Alpharma Pharmaceuticals LLC, many respondents reported that pain disrupts their work productivity (48 percent), participation in recreational activities (65 percent), ability to take care of their homes and do chores (59 percent), and ability to take care of themselves and family members (41 percent). Despite this disruption, respondents were reluctant to treat their pain, especially with prescription pills, as 93 percent agreed with the statement that “people take too many pills these days.” Others reported that they did not want to take a general medication for pain in a specific part of the body, or that oral medications upset their stomachs.<sup>2</sup>

“The results of this survey indicate that the majority of Americans either do not know how to control their pain or do not take appropriate action to control their pain,” said Mark Rasmussen, president and chief executive officer of the National Pain Foundation. “If pain, particularly acute pain, is left untreated it can become a chronic condition with a much bigger impact on the individual, their family, and even their employer. People with pain can combat their problem and often resume their normal activities by seeking professional help in a timely manner, as a doctor can recommend or prescribe a wide variety of effective treatment options.”

NPF believes that it is important for people with pain to seek professional help, as there are many new types of effective treatments that people will not have access to unless they see a doctor or other healthcare provider. These new treatments run the gamut from physical therapy to complementary medicine to new prescription drugs in both pill and topical application formats.

The survey asked respondents about one example of a new delivery option for pain relief. The new option is a topical prescription patch that delivers medication directly to the site of pain, bypassing the stomach and minimizing absorption of medication in other parts of the body. When asked about this new type of medicated pain patch, 55 percent of survey respondents indicated that they thought they would prefer it over pills for pain management.<sup>2</sup>

Acute pain is a common problem, with one in four Americans suffering an episode of pain lasting longer than 24 hours.<sup>4</sup> Acute (short-term) pain lasts for less than three months and resolves after successful intervention or healing. The most common causes of acute pain are sprains, strains and contusions, and the most common source of pain is the lower back, which accounts for \$26.3 billion dollars annually in the United States in direct costs.<sup>5</sup> Chronic (long-term) pain generally lasts longer than three months, affects as many as 70 million people and has been said to be the most costly health problem in America.<sup>6,7</sup>

#### **Other Survey Findings Include:**

- Out of all 1,484 adults surveyed and screened for the study:
  - A significant number – 42 percent – were experiencing some form of pain on the day of the survey.<sup>1</sup>
  - Seventy-two percent experienced pain in the last 12 months, and 27 percent of respondents experienced acute pain.<sup>1</sup>
- More than half of respondents suffering from pain did not see a healthcare professional, which is especially true with acute pain sufferers: 70 percent for acute pain vs. 45 percent for recurrent pain and 20 percent for chronic pain.<sup>2</sup>
- Among respondents who did not see a doctor to treat their pain, one-third believed that their doctor simply couldn't help them.<sup>2</sup>
- Even among those who did see a doctor, 81 percent of respondents, including 71 percent of acute pain sufferers delayed going, hoping to deal with the pain on their own.<sup>2</sup>

#### **About the Survey**

A survey of 1,484 U.S. adults was conducted in December 2007 through a Harris Interactive poll to measure the incidence and types of pain experienced in the last 12 months by adults age 18 and older. Among these, 653 respondents reported “qualifying” pain—including long term chronic pain, long term recurrent pain, and/or short term acute pain—and were asked additional questions about how they treat their pain. Unless noted otherwise, statistics in this release focus on recurrent and acute pain sufferers. Final data were weighted to correct for stratified random sampling within each of these categories. The survey was sponsored by the NPF with the assistance of a grant provided by Alharma Pharmaceuticals LLC.

## About the National Pain Foundation

The National Pain Foundation (NPF), a non-profit 501(c) (3) organization, was established in 1998 to serve the 75 million Americans living with pain. Its mission is to improve the quality of life for those living with pain through information, education and support that connects persons with pain to each other and to those who can help. NPF is built on the belief that early intervention of pain conditions can positively change the direction of a person's life. NPF also empowers patients by helping them become actively involved in the design of their pain management treatment plan. For more information, please visit [www.NationalPainFoundation.org](http://www.NationalPainFoundation.org), one of the premier sites providing accurate and reliable information and community support to persons in pain. Further results for this survey can be found at [www.NationalPainFoundation.org/MyResearch/PainSurvey2008.asp](http://www.NationalPainFoundation.org/MyResearch/PainSurvey2008.asp).

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<sup>1</sup> A survey of 1,484 U.S. adults sponsored by the National Pain Foundation with the assistance of a grant provided by Alpharma Pharmaceuticals LLC in December 2007.

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<sup>3</sup> Acute vs. Chronic Pain. The Cleveland Clinic Information Center. <http://www.clevelandclinic.org/health/health-info/docs/3600/3657.asp?index=12051>. Accessed December 28, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> National Center for Health Statistics. Health, United States, 2006. With Chartbook on Trends in the Health of Americans. Hyattsville, MD: 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Chou R, et al. *Annals of Internal Medicine*. 2007;147:478-491.

<sup>6</sup> Krames, Elliot. Intraspinal opioid therapy for chronic non-malignant pain: current practice and clinical guidelines. *J Pain and Symptom Manage*, 1996.

<sup>7</sup> Chronic Pain. Ohio State University Medical Center.

[http://medicalcenter.osu.edu/patientcare/healthcare\\_services/spine\\_shoulders\\_pelvic\\_disorders/chronic\\_pain/](http://medicalcenter.osu.edu/patientcare/healthcare_services/spine_shoulders_pelvic_disorders/chronic_pain/). Accessed January 7, 2008.