



Press Release

Independent Pharmacies Take Top Honors In Consumer Reports Nationwide Survey

Alexandria, Virginia - September 10, 2003

Consumers Value Personalized Service Received at Independents
Alexandria, Virginia, September 10, 2003 - Independent community pharmacies were rated the best among all retail pharmacy outlets in America by an "eye-popping margin," according to a nationwide survey of consumer satisfaction published in the October 2003 issue of Consumer Reports magazine.

In the article titled "Time to Switch," Consumer Reports also noted that independent community pharmacy prices are often lower than those of chain drugstores.

Regarding selecting a pharmacy, Consumer Reports recommended, "If you're among the 47 percent of Americans who get medicine from drugstore giants such as CVS, Eckerd, and Rite Aid, here's a prescription: Try shopping somewhere else. The best place to start looking is one of the 25,000 independent pharmacies that are making a comeback throughout the U.S."

More than 32,000 readers participated in the Consumer Reports survey. They described 40,000 experiences at 31 national and regional pharmacy chains including CVS, Rite Aid, and Walgreens; supermarket pharmacies such as Kroger, Publix, and Safeway; mass-merchant pharmacies including Costco, Target, and Wal-Mart; and independent pharmacies across the nation.

More than 85 percent of those surveyed were very satisfied or completely satisfied with their independent pharmacy experience, compared with 58 percent for chain drugstore customers.

Independent pharmacies were deemed "most likely to have fast service and a helpful pharmacist" by those surveyed.

When consumers favored drugstore chains and supermarkets, typically these were family owned pharmacies or businesses in which workers have a stake such as the Medicine Shoppe's independent pharmacies.

Readers preferred independent pharmacies for the following reasons:

- * "Pharmacists at independent stores were accessible,

approachable, and easy to talk to, and that they were especially knowledgeable about medications, both prescription and nonprescription."

* Independents offer extra services "such as disease-management education, in-store health screenings for cholesterol, services such as compounding (customizing medications for patients with special needs), and home delivery."

* Independent pharmacies stock more "hard-to-find medications" than other pharmacies.

Commenting on the survey, NCPA President Joe Smith, R.Ph., said, "It is gratifying to know that our patients value the high level of service they receive from their independent pharmacist. Some of us have served generations of families in our communities, and the pharmacist-patient relationship has long been at the heart of independent pharmacy practice."

"Service matters," said NCPA executive vice president and CEO Bruce Roberts, R.Ph. "The exceptional quality of care independent pharmacists provide their patients is the primary reason they are able to compete and thrive in the face of formidable competition from publicly held chains and other national pharmacy operations."

The National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA) represents the nation's community pharmacists, including the owners of nearly 24,000 pharmacies. The nation's independent pharmacies, independent pharmacy franchises, and independent chains represent a \$67 billion marketplace, dispensing nearly half of the nation's three billion retail prescription medicines.