
Consumers and Physicians Report on the Health Effects of Direct-to-Consumer Advertising (DTCA)

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Harvard/Harris Interactive Studies of Patients' and Physicians' Reports on Health Effects of DTCA

- Both studies jointly funded by the AMA-Industry Roundtable Steering Committee and selected members of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Economics of the Pharmaceutical Industry
- First to focus on healthcare effects, including perceived outcomes
- ***The study team had full control over the content of the surveys, access to the data, and control over interpretation of the results.***



Main Study Questions

- 1) What influence has DTCA had on consumers' actions to improve their health?
- 2) What sorts of conditions are diagnosed as a result of DTCA visits with physicians?
- 3) What actions are taken as a result of DTCA visits?
- 4) What outcomes are reported as a result of taking prescription meds resulting from DTCA visits?



Patient Survey: Medical Event Associated with DTCA-Prompted Physician Visits

All Adult Consumers n=3000

100%

Heard or Saw DTCA n=2563

86%

& Had DTCA Discussion w/ MD
n=1036

35%

& Physician Prescribed a Drug & Patient
Took it as Prescribed n=650

21%

& Patient Switched Drugs
n= 154

5%



Effect of DTCA on Promoting Healthy Behaviors

Consumers who have seen/heard advertisement in past 12 months

All Consumers

Percent of consumers who have done each of the following mostly or partly due to a prescription drug advertisement they saw:

Looked for more information about an advertised drug	30%	25%
Started taking more personal control over their health	25%	21%
Became better at taking Rx as prescribed	18%	15%
Improved their diet	19%	16%
Began exercising more often	16%	14%
Improved their smoking/drinking habits	8%	6%



DTCA Prompts Different Types of Patient-Doctor Discussions

Of consumers who have been prompted by DTCA to have a discussion about their health with a doctor:

Percent prompted to discuss:

a prescription drug:

37%

a possible change in treatment for an existing medical condition or illness:

22%

a medical condition, illness or other health concern that they had not discussed with a doctor before:

36%

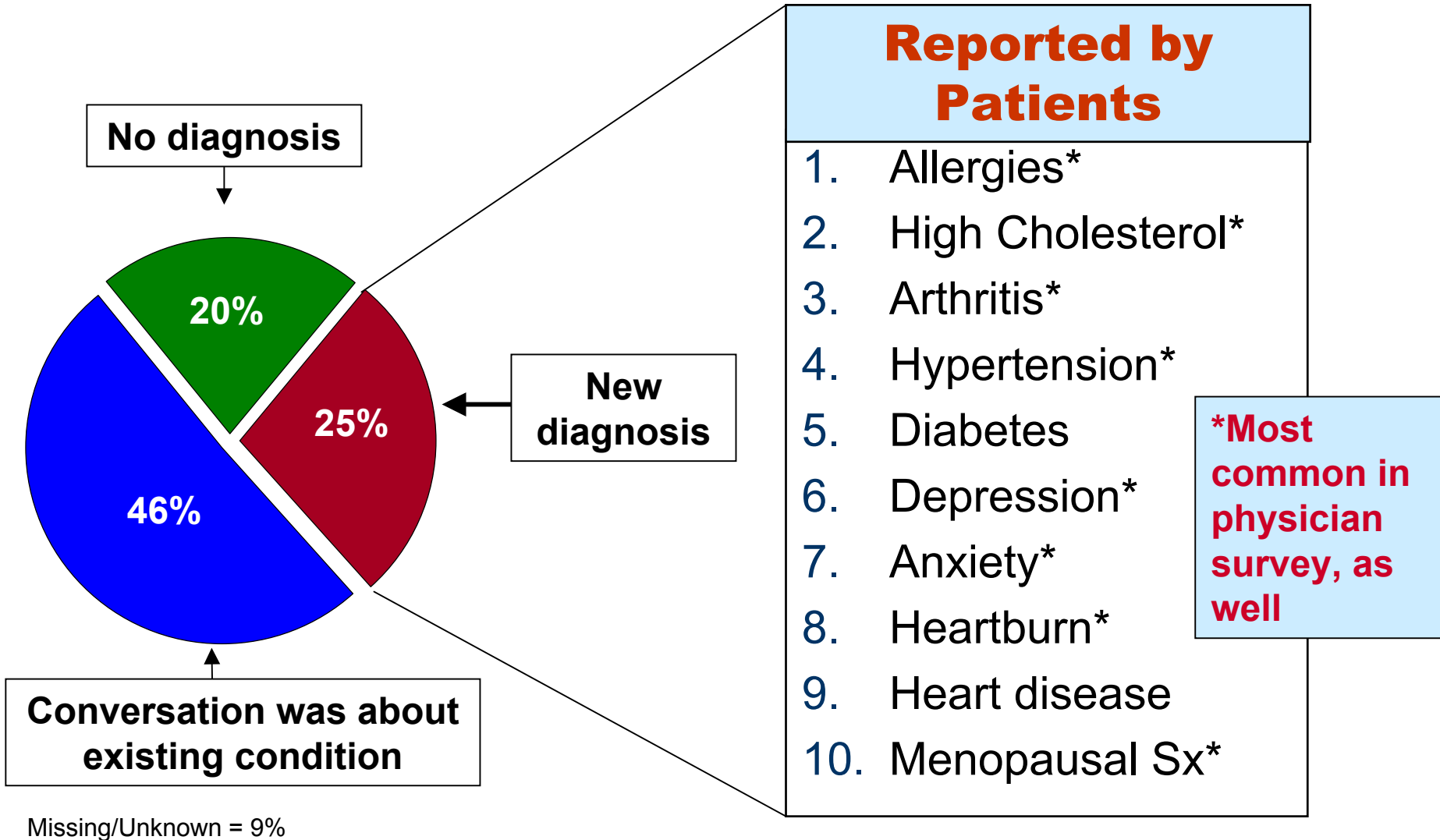
other :

5%

100%



Most Common New Diagnoses From DTCA Visits





Patient Survey: Many “New” Diagnoses Are Considered High Priority by IOM/AHRQ

Among 25% DTCA visits with new diagnosis:

43% of new diagnoses were “high priority” conditions according to AHRQ/IOM criteria (e.g., diabetes, high cholesterol, hypertension, arthritis, asthma, stomach ulcers, depression and anxiety disorders)

Weissman, et al, Health Affairs, 2003



Actions Taken By Physicians on Behalf of Patients Having Recent DTCA Visits

Patient Reports:

Prescribed DTCA drug	43%
Prescribed any drug	72%
Prescribed any drug (& patient was not receiving treatment for condition prior to visit)	23%
Referred to specialist	32%
Suggested lifestyle change	52%
Recommended OTC drug	19%
Recommended diagnostic test	57%

Weissman, et al, Health Affairs, 2003



Actions Taken By Physicians Varied Somewhat by Whether the Condition was High Priority or Not

Patient Reports

	High Priority Conditions	All Other Conditions
Prescribed DTCA drug.....	47.4%	47.8%
Prescribed any drug.....	81.4	70.8
Referred to specialist.....	40.1*	31.8
Suggested lifestyle change.....	66.0*	42.7
Recommended OTC drug.....	14.4*	23.6
Recommended diagnostic test.....	72.1*	50.4

* - $p < .05$

Weissman, et al, Health Affairs, 2003



Patient Survey: Overall Health and Results of Lab Tests

Among Patients Receiving & Taking Prescription Drugs

Type of Drug

Switched Drugs

DTCA

Other

To
DTCA

To
Other

All

Overall Health*

Much/Some Better

81

81

86

78

81

About the Same

11

15

10

18

13

Some/Much Worse

6

4

4

3

5

Lab Tests

Change for Better

86

82

94

87

84

No change/Not sure

4

2

6

3

3

Change for Worse

10

16

0

10

13

Weissman, et al, Health Affairs, 2003

* Totals do not include Missing / Not Sure



Physician Survey Compared with Patient Survey

- Similar frequency with regard to DTCA drug prescribed
- Some differences with regard to frequency of other actions taken, e.g., referral to specialist
- Similar distribution of reported conditions and diagnoses



Physician Survey: What Did Physicians Say When They Prescribed the Advertised Drug?

Among Cases Where DTCA Drug was Prescribed, physicians commonly said either:

It was the most effective drug for patient

It was as effective as other drugs for patient, and I wanted to accommodate the patients' request

A few said:

Other drugs or treatment options were more effective, but wanted to accommodate patient's request



Physician Survey: What Did Physicians Say When They Did NOT Prescribe the Advertised Drug?

- Different drug was more appropriate
- Less expensive equally effective drug was available
- Another course of treatment was more appropriate
- Patient choice
- No treatment was necessary
- Drug was not on patient's formulary



Summary

- Providing information to patients has benefits that seem to transcend the provision of the advertised drug
- Many new diagnoses associated with DTCA visits are for important conditions
- Adverse health outcomes feared by some critics are not widespread, at least in the short term
- Some ambivalence about prescribing behavior may be occurring