

National Community Pharmacists Association

The Voice of the Community Pharmacist

Press Release

New Survey Highlights Customer Satisfaction with Independent Pharmacies

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A new report from J.D. Power and Associates on retail and mail order pharmacies shows that, by a wide margin, the business model typically offered by independent pharmacies provides the greatest consumer satisfaction, as compared to traditional chain pharmacies, mass merchandisers, and supermarket pharmacies. Although J.D. Power was unable to rate independent pharmacies as a group in its analysis, it did survey consumers on their satisfaction with Medicine Shoppe pharmacies, a franchise of independent pharmacy owners. By a wide margin, Medicine Shoppe rated higher than all other pharmacies and mail order warehouses examined in the J.D. Power report.

The new data echoes the findings of a study conducted in 2003 by Consumer's Union, publisher of *Consumer Reports*. That study found that more than 85 percent of customers at independent drugstores were very satisfied or completely satisfied with their experience, compared with 58 percent of chain drugstore customers. In the *Consumer Reports* study, independent pharmacies, including Medicine Shoppe pharmacies, both topped the customer satisfaction list with nearly identical scores.

Despite consistent high satisfaction ratings among consumers, independent pharmacies are currently threatened by low and slow reimbursement under the Medicare Part D program, and further reimbursement cuts in the Medicaid program.

"Customer satisfaction is about more than a good pharmacy experience," said John Tilley, RPh, president of the National Community Pharmacists Association and a pharmacy owner from Downey, Calif. "Personal attention has always been the hallmark of independent pharmacy practice—a level of service that protects the health, safety, and quality of life of patients. That tradition of professional service among independent pharmacies is being threatened by Medicare Part D and looming Medicaid cuts. These government programs have a disproportionately negative impact on independent pharmacies, and on the millions of patients we serve."

In both studies, the critical factor that gave independent pharmacies a commanding lead in customer satisfaction was the level of interaction with patients. The J.D. Power report found that customer satisfaction was significantly higher in pharmacies where consumers are asked if they want to speak to the pharmacist. The survey of chain, supermarket, and mass merchandiser pharmacies found that "the percentage of customers who aren't offered contact with the pharmacist is still alarmingly high," said the J.D. Power report.

In its 2003 report on pharmacy consumer satisfaction, *Consumer Reports* said, "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."

The National Community Pharmacists Association, founded in 1898, represents the nation's community pharmacists, including the owners of more than 24,000 pharmacies. The nation's independent pharmacies, independent pharmacy franchises, and independent chains dispense nearly half of the nation's retail prescription medicines.