

# RoperASW

THE POWER OF INTELLIGENCE IN ACTION

## *Health Literacy and the Prescription Drug Experience:*

## *The Frontline Perspective from Patients, Physicians and Pharmacists*

PREPARED FOR:

# **Pfizer**

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## Highlights From the Findings

### Health Literacy A Serious Issue Facing Country

- Although they may not call it “health literacy” -- a vast majority of patients, primary care physicians and pharmacists -- seven in ten or more -- all agree that the inability to read and understand prescription and healthcare information is a serious issue facing the country.

**% Say health literacy is a very or somewhat serious issue**



### Patients, Physicians & Pharmacists Say Inability To Understand Linked To Poor Health

- Three-quarters or more of patients, physicians and pharmacists say the inability to understand prescription instructions contributes to poor health.

**% Say inability to understand instructions very often or sometimes contributes to poor health**



### Physicians & Pharmacists Say Patients Regularly Have Trouble Understanding

- Physicians, pharmacists and patients do not agree on the frequency that people have trouble reading and understanding prescription instructions. The vast majority of physicians and pharmacists believe patients have trouble, whereas patients think this happens less frequently.

**% Say very often or sometimes have trouble reading and understanding instructions**

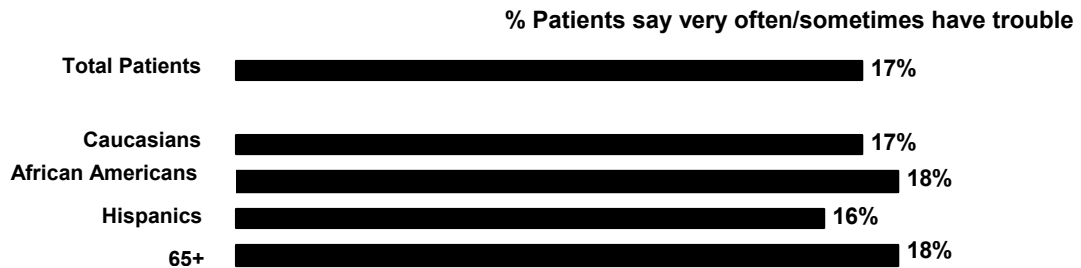


## Physicians & Pharmacists Cannot Depend On Patients Knowing Or Admitting They Have Trouble Understanding

- Many patients are not aware or are not willing to admit that they personally have trouble understanding. Only 17% of all patients say they sometimes or often have trouble reading and understanding prescription instructions.

## People Of Every Age and Race Have Trouble Understanding Prescription Instructions

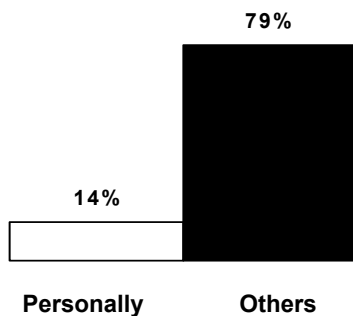
- People who admit having had trouble reading and understanding prescription instructions span every race/ethnicity and age.



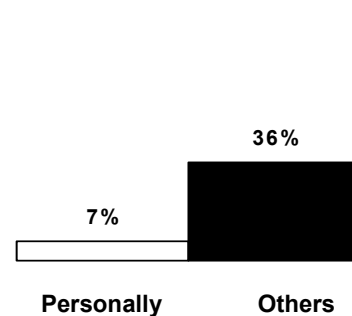
## Patients Say That Other People Feel Awkward Asking Physician To Explain

- Although most patients reject the notion that they personally have felt awkward communicating their lack of understanding of prescriptions to their Physician, almost 8 of 10 believe that it's a problem for other people. Less than 10% also say they personally have had problems with their health because of misunderstanding, but one-third think that other people have had problems.

**% Awkward communicating to physician about lack of understanding**

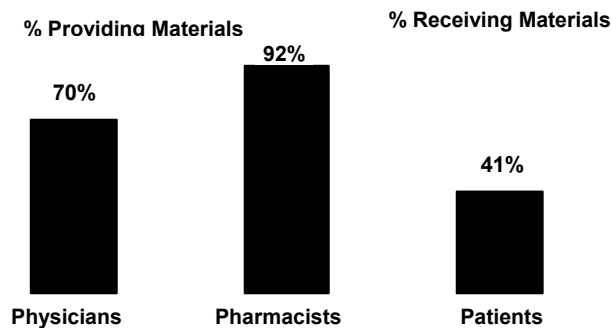


**% Have health problems**



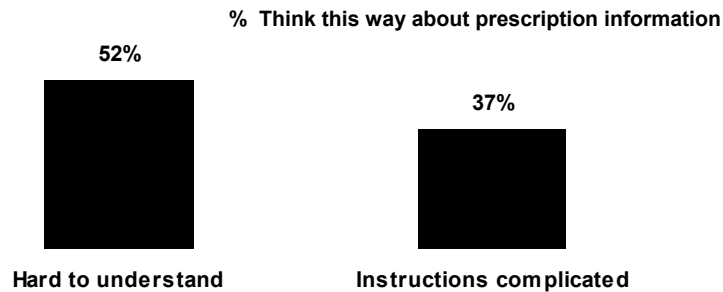
## Relatively Few Patients Report Receiving Explanatory Information From Physicians

- Physicians and patients disagree on how often they receive explanatory materials about their prescriptions. Almost three-quarters or more of physicians and pharmacists say they routinely provide patients with information other than the prescription itself. In contrast, only 41% of patients say they receive additional information.



## Patients Say Prescription Information & Instructions Difficult To Understand

- Half of patients say that the prescription information and instruction they receive is written in language that is hard to read and understand --and one-third say the instructions are complicated.

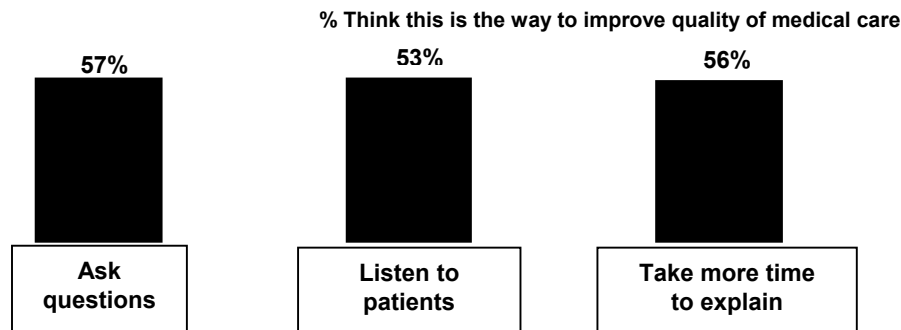


## Health Literacy Not A Familiar Term To Most Physicians; Few Have Received Training

- Three quarters of physicians and pharmacists say they have not heard of “health literacy”<sup>1</sup>. The bad news is relatively few physicians (14%) or pharmacists (28%) have received any training on how to address health literacy problems. The good news is a majority of both physicians (64%) and pharmacists (85%) are interested in receiving that training.

## Patients Have A Prescription For Physicians & Pharmacists: Take More Time, Listen & Ask Questions

- It is not just the lack of additional prescription information that affects the quality of medical care. Patients say that physicians and pharmacists need to ask more questions to make sure patients understand and also to listen better. Patients also advise physicians and pharmacists to take more time to explain things.



<sup>1</sup> Health Literacy pertains to the degree to which patients can read, understand and act on health information in order to improve their health outcomes.

## Methodology

This study was conducted by RoperASW via telephone from March 18th through April 4th, 2002, among 666 patients, 150 primary care physicians (PCPs), and 151 pharmacists.

For this study:

- Patients were defined as adults 18+ who are currently taking a prescription medication and who had seen a Physician who prescribed medication to them in the past six months;
- The core general population sample was comprised of 304 patients;
- Additional over-sampling was done to achieve a minimum sample of 150 each of African Americans, Hispanics and patients 65 years of age and older;
- The samples of patients were weighted according to US Census data to ensure an accurate representation of the study populations.

