



## Media Release

### CHC Sheds New Light on Complementary Medicine Consumption

**The Complementary Healthcare Council of Australia (CHC) highlights new perspectives of medicine consumers with its latest independent, Consumer focused research shining the spotlight on the real issues concerning them on the direction of the Industry.**

The CHC has collaborated with Sydney based firm UMR Research to conduct a significant piece of Consumer research which tackles some of the key issues currently facing the Complementary Medicines Industry. Whilst other organisations undertake what claims to be consumer focused research, the CHC's findings are based on a nationally representative sample of the population as opposed to 'consumerist' opinions from Member based respondents with a specific agenda.

*"Identifying real consumer opinions based on an independently produced and conducted survey is crucial to understanding what consumers really think and what they actually want from our Industry,"* commented Dr Wendy Morrow, Executive Director of the CHC. *"This research builds on the foundations of existing consumer research previously undertaken by the CHC and assists us in advocating what the consumers actually want."* Dr Morrow continued.

Amongst the findings of the research is the fact that the number of Australians using Complementary Medicines has increased in recent years. Responses indicate that approximately 76% of the population purchase Complementary Medicine products.

Respondents to the survey who agreed that they are 'Very Happy' were found to be more frequent buyers of Vitamins – with women more likely to buy than men. The brand of a product was proven to be of importance to those purchasing products on a more frequent basis, as well as the younger demographic, although the overall appearance of the label of the product was not considered important by the majority of respondents.

The survey further explored the highly contentious issue of labelling and found that the ingredients of a product are considered the most important factor on a label when purchasing a product. This was followed by the details of a product's ingredients, the explanation of the product and information around dosage; these all being pieces of information that enable consumers to make informed decisions when purchasing products, illustrating that consumers actively choose their products in an informed manner. Unsurprisingly, Government registration of a product came in near the bottom of the list of factors polled.

*"Input from real Consumers and an open dialogue between the Industry and the Consumer is critical to ensuring that health policy moves in the appropriate direction and actually achieves what it is in place to do – shape Government health initiatives for the benefit of the Australian population,"* commented Dr Morrow.

As reported in Pharmacy News on 13 December 2011<sup>1</sup>, and as evidenced by the CHC's most recent piece of research, use of Complementary Medicines is becoming more widespread. As such, not only does the Industry need to understand what Consumers think, but the wider healthcare Industry needs to ensure they are informed and that appropriate questions are asked of patients and consumers in terms of their use of Complementary Medicines. The

<sup>1</sup> Pharmacy News, December 13, 2011

<http://www.pharmacynews.com.au/getmedia/ea1c9b6-67fb-4f74-a6e3-1b04eff29b86/PN20111213.aspx?ext=.pdf>



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article appearing in Pharmacy News in December highlighted research published in the *Medical Journal of Australia* indicating that 42% of Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) patients use Complementary Medicines<sup>2</sup>. This further goes to show that understanding Consumer use and opinions on Complementary Medicines is not only crucial in shaping health policy but also to wider patient disease management as well as general health and wellbeing.

The CHC will continue its dialogue with consumers, assembling opinion and feeding this into Industry and Government to shape the direction of policy on behalf of the Australian Consumer.

For more information about the CHC and our work around Consumer Research, please visit our website or contact us directly: <http://www.chc.org.au/>

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<sup>2</sup> *Medical Journal of Australia*

*Complementary medicine use in cardiovascular disease: a clinician's viewpoint* MJA 2011; 195 (11/12): 654-656  
[http://www.mja.com.au/public/issues/195\\_11\\_121211/kia10976\\_fm.html](http://www.mja.com.au/public/issues/195_11_121211/kia10976_fm.html)