



## **PATIENTS OPPOSE PRESCRIPTION MANDATE FOR OTC MEDICINES CONTAINING PSEUDOEPHEDRINE**

*Patients call for alternate policy that provides continued access to meds*

(Washington, DC – January 24, 2011) More than 300 million Americans get the common cold, and up to 70 million get the flu annually. But for the 60 million people who also have asthma and allergies, a cold or flu can pose even greater risks. Together, these respiratory diseases take a devastating toll on public health, costing billions of dollars in direct medical expenses, reducing quality of life, lowering workplace and school performance, and can even be life-threatening to high-risk populations, such as asthma patients.

While over 16 million children and adults in the U.S. depend on over-the-counter (OTC) medicines containing pseudoephedrine (PSE) for relief and care, direct and immediate access to these medications is being threatened by some states looking at requiring prescriptions for them. Although alternatives exist for some, OTC medicines containing PSE are the only oral decongestants available for 12- and 24- hour relief, and for many, these medicines are the only oral decongestants that work for them. Without timely access to these OTC options, negative health consequences could result for many patients.

Regrettably, some criminals divert PSE-containing medicines to illegally manufacture methamphetamine. In response, a small number of states and cities have suggested these OTC medications be made “prescription only,” but patients and doctors are beginning to speak up to let policy makers know that this is not the right solution.

### **Strong Opposition to “Prescription-Only” Measures**

In a recent survey by the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA) ([www.aafa.org/pse](http://www.aafa.org/pse)) researchers found that seven in ten asthma, allergy, cold, cough and flu sufferers who purchased non-prescription medicine for their condition (71%) oppose “prescription-only” laws.

“Taking away patient freedom by requiring prescriptions for important over-the-counter medications is not a solution to the meth problem,” says Mike Tringale, Vice President of External Affairs at AAFA. “Based on our recent survey of allergy, asthma, cold, cough and flu patients, we recognize that timely access to these medicines is critical for people. In fact, prescription medication abuse itself is a bigger problem than ever, and continues to rise, which proves that we need to find better law-enforcement strategies for this.”

AAFA’s study, conducted online among more than 2,006 asthma, allergy, cold, cough, and flu sufferers who purchased non-prescription medicine for their condition by Harris Interactive and supported by a grant from the



Consumer Healthcare Products Association (CHPA), provides a major indication that patients would like to see lawmakers consider alternate measures that don't force a prescription mandate on the millions of law-abiding patients who rely on these OTC medicines.

### **E-Tracking Succeeds Where Log Books Fail**

Since 2006, consumers purchasing OTC medicines with PSE have been asked to sign log books at pharmacies, but enforcement of this policy, monitoring of logs, and manually tracking purchases has been inconsistent and unreliable with deadly consequences: the meth problem continues to rise in many states. The challenge: everyone wants to end the illegal drug problem, so how can we stop meth without limiting patient access to the critical medications they need?

According to the findings in AAFA's survey, patients feel strongly that there are smarter, more effective solutions to controlling the manufacture of meth than moving common OTC medications to prescription status. In fact, another key finding showed that two-thirds of respondents (66%) would support a law for nationwide electronic tracking (e-tracking) of medication purchases, and 64% would prefer an e-tracking law, rather than requiring a doctor's prescription, to track and block sales of pseudoephedrine that go over the legal limit – a system that is already working in more than a dozen states.

When faced with the choice, 63% of asthma, allergy, cold, cough and flu sufferers said they agree the implementation of e-tracking would be the most effective way of preventing medication sales for illegal uses without penalizing those who truly need them. Only 18% say they agree that a doctor's prescription would be the most effective way.

"New, smart technology is the best way to fight illegal methamphetamines," according to Charlotte Collins, AAFA's Vice President for Policy and Programs. "Using a multi-state electronic blocking technology can be an effective tool to catch criminals while still preserving access to these medicines, and not over-burdening physicians with more prescribing decisions," says Collins.

Among the chief reasons patients in the survey prefer e-tracking include:

- It is more effective and less burdensome than requiring prescriptions (66% support);
- It doesn't infringe on law-abiding citizens who want easy and immediate access to the OTC meds they need (49% oppose a prescription requirement for this reason);
- E-tracking builds on the existing framework and law enforcement in states and regions (65% support);
- It can be updated in real-time (59% support); and
- Health records remain private and protected (65% support).

AAFA has posted the survey report online for the public and policymakers at [www.aafa.org/pse](http://www.aafa.org/pse) so people can learn what to do in their own states to fight meth while also preserving access to OTC medications.

"Patients are really concerned about extreme local laws that limit their freedom to access meds," says Tringale,



“and AAFA is working with patients nationwide to teach lawmakers about solutions like e-tracking. We want to ensure that any policy decision to prevent the illegal sale of these medicines takes into account the voices of patients.”

### **About the Survey**

AAFA’s National Pseudoephedrine (PSE) Awareness Study was conducted online in July 2010 among more than 2,000 U.S. adults age 18+ who personally suffered from asthma, allergies, cold, cough or flu in the preceding 12 months and purchased non-prescription medications for at least one condition during that time. Survey participants were asked more than 40 questions each. Nearly two-thirds (62%) of respondents are employed, more than half (57%) are female, nearly half (42%) are married and one-quarter (24%) have a child in the household. The study was conducted online and used Harris Interactive’s proprietary propensity weighting to ensure the online sample reflects general population trends. For a full copy of the survey report, and to learn what you can do in your state to fight meth and preserve access to OTC medications, visit [www.aafa.org/pse](http://www.aafa.org/pse).

### **About AAFA**

The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA), a not-for-profit organization founded in 1953, is the leading patient organization for people with asthma, allergies and related conditions. AAFA is dedicated to improving the quality of life for patients through education, advocacy and research. AAFA provides practical information, community based services and support through a network of regional chapters, support groups and other local partners around the United States. For more information, visit [www.aafa.org](http://www.aafa.org).

### **About Harris Interactive**

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