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**National Community Pharmacists Association**

From: Kellyanne Conway, President & CEO  
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Re: “Behind the Counter” Omnibus Survey Results & Analysis

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## Introduction and Methodology

**the polling company™, inc.** is pleased to present to the **National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA)** the results and analysis of three questions added to a recent national telephone omnibus survey of 1,000 adults aged 18.

The survey was fielded November 8-11, 2007 at a Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) phone facility using live callers. The sample was drawn utilizing Random Digit Dial (RDD), where phone numbers were generated by a computer to ensure that every household in the nation with a landline telephone had an equal chance to be surveyed.

Sampling controls were employed to ensure representative and proportional numbers of respondents were interviewed according to demographic characteristics such as race, age, gender, and geographic region, as reported by the latest available U.S. Census Bureau statistics.

The three substantive questions related to the proposal by the United States Food and Drug Administration to create a new class of drugs and medications known as “Behind the Counter” drugs. These medications would be available only from pharmacists but would not require a doctor’s order. All questions were approved by NCPA prior to fielding.

The margin of error is calculated at +/- 3.1% at the 95% confidence level, meaning that in 19 out of 20 cases, the results obtained would differ by no more than 3.1 percentage points in either direction if the entire adult population nationwide were to be surveyed. Margins of error for subgroups are higher.

## Behind the Counter Background

The idea to create a third class of medications at the federal level known as “behind the counter” drugs – to go along with prescription and over the counter drugs available now – was proposed by the FDA before, but died after criticism in a 1995 report by the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO). However, more than a decade later, the FDA is ready to consider the idea again and is holding hearings on November 14, 2007 to assess the public’s reaction to such a plan.

## Americans Strongly *Behind* Creating a New Category of Drugs & Medications.

By a margin of more than two-to-one, American adults surveyed enthusiastically endorsed a new classification for medications being considered by the FDA called “behind the counter” drugs (68%-24%).

**Support was not only broad (including majorities of every demographic group), but also intense, as 38% strongly backed this proposal.**

- ❖ Those most likely to approve of placing pharmacists in charge of dispensing certain medications to patients included 18-24 year olds, residents of the Western United States, households earning more than \$75,000 per year, and parents.
- ❖ Though majorities of every demographic group supported this new class of drugs, senior citizens – who consume more medications, prescription and non-prescription, than any other age group – were more likely than respondents overall to voice their opposition (33%).

As you may know, there are currently two main types of drugs and medicines legally dispensed and taken in this country. One class is known as prescription drugs – those medications for which you must get a doctor’s order or prescription to obtain and that are dispensed by pharmacists. The second class is known as “over the counter” drugs – and includes those medications that you can simply buy off the shelf at grocery stores, pharmacies, and other retailers without a doctor’s order.

The United States Food and Drug Administration, or FDA, is considering creating a third class of drugs which would be known as the “behind the counter” class of drugs. These would be medications that would not require a prescription, but would be stocked behind the pharmacy counter and dispensed by a pharmacist. Before selling the medication, the pharmacist would give patient information about the drug including how often to take it, what kind of side effects the patient might experience and other important safety warnings the patient should know before they could buy the medication.

*Based on this information, would you support or oppose the creation of “behind the counter” drugs or medications?*

**68% TOTAL SUPPORT (NET)**

38% STRONGLY SUPPORT  
30% SOMEWHAT SUPPORT

**24% TOTAL OPPOSE (NET)**

10% SOMEWHAT OPPOSE  
14% STRONGLY OPPOSE

## Two Distinct Elements of “Behind the Counter” Proposal Met With Majority Approval.

More than six-in-ten (62%) of Americans supported converting certain prescription drugs into behind the counter medications – 28 points more than the 34% who opposed such a plan<sup>1</sup>.

❖ **A majority of every demographic group except senior citizens indicated support for eliminating the need for a doctor’s order for certain medications currently available only with a prescription.**

❖ Seniors were split 47% in favor and 45% opposed.

❖ Groups likely than most to support included 18-24 year olds, Hispanic Americans, those in every income category except \$35,000 to \$50,000 per year, and parents.

❖ African-Americans joined senior citizens as more inclined than respondents overall to oppose this proposal.

The first/second type of medication that may become a “behind the counter” drug are certain medications that currently require a doctor’s prescription such as those that lower cholesterol or treat acid reflux.

*Would you support or oppose allowing medications like these to be dispensed by a pharmacist without a doctor’s order?*

**62% TOTAL SUPPORT (NET)**

32% STRONGLY SUPPORT

30% SOMEWHAT SUPPORT

**34% TOTAL OPPOSE (NET)**

13% SOMEWHAT OPPOSE

21% STRONGLY OPPOSE

The first/second type of medication that may become a “behind the counter” drug are certain non-prescription medications that are currently available for purchase off the shelf, but that have shown the potential to be dangerous if taken incorrectly, such as some cold and allergy medications.

*Would you support or oppose requiring certain non-prescription medications like these to be placed behind the pharmacy counter and dispensed by a pharmacist?*

**66% TOTAL SUPPORT (NET)**

38% STRONGLY SUPPORT

28% SOMEWHAT SUPPORT

**31% TOTAL OPPOSE (NET)**

11% SOMEWHAT OPPOSE

20% STRONGLY OPPOSE

An even greater percentage of Americans supported taking certain non-prescription medications off store shelves and placing them behind the pharmacy counter and under the control of pharmacists. In fact, 66% of adults surveyed would favor such an action, more than twice the 31% who would oppose it.

❖ **A majority of at least 57% of every demographic group surveyed endorsed this plan, including 64% of senior citizens.**

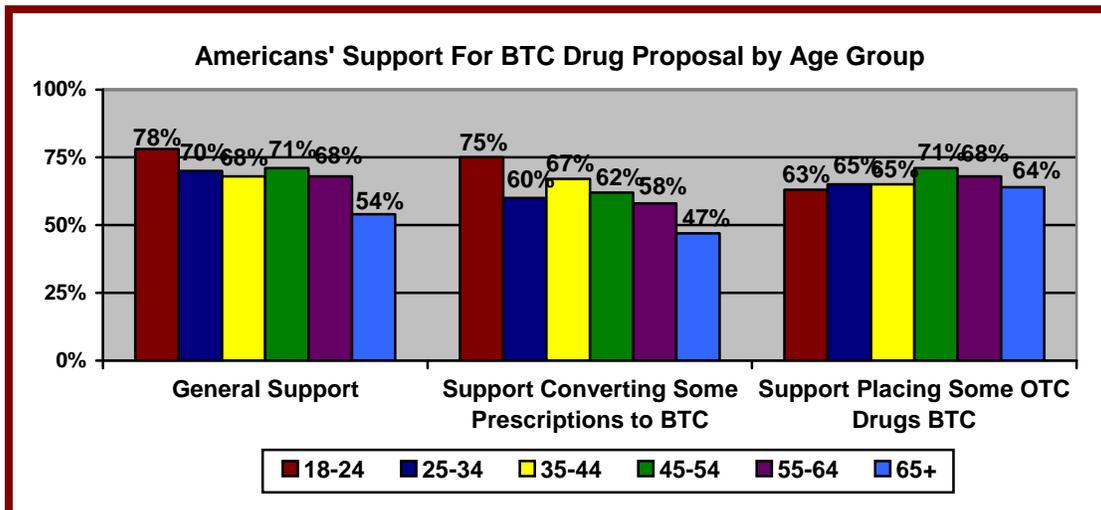
❖ Women were more likely than men to support taking potentially dangerous over the counter drugs out of the reach of casual shoppers (70%-62%), the only gender gap to emerge of the three questions posed.

<sup>1</sup> The two questions about the individual components of the plan to create a BTC class of drugs were rotated such that half of respondents were asked this question about making certain current prescription drugs available directly from a pharmacist first and half were asked the question about placing certain current over the counter medications behind the pharmacy counter first.

- ❖ Despite the recent headlines questioning the safety of cold and cough medicines for young children and the on-going stories of the potential dangers of certain drugs for children, parents were only four points more likely than non-parents to favor this proposed change (69%-65%).
- ❖ Groups more likely than adults surveyed overall to back removing some OTC medicines from the shelves included 45-54 year olds, Whites, and those earning more than \$50,000 per year.
- ❖ Those more apt than most to oppose the plan included Hispanics and those earning between \$25,000 and \$35,000 per year.

### Spotlight on Age: A Key Indicator of Opinion on BTC Drugs

As noted several times in this analysis, Americans' age appeared to influence their support for or opposition to the components of the FDA's plans to create a third class of medications known as "Behind the Counter" drugs. As the following graph depicts, with respect to general approval of the proposal and favor towards allowing pharmacists to dispense certain drugs formerly available only by prescription, young adults stood out as most behind the plan and senior citizens least supportive. Age played a different roll in impacting opinions on the matter of placing some currently over the counter drugs under the purview of pharmacists: those in the middle age categories were most in favor, while young adults and seniors were not as inclined to declare it a good idea.



Overall, however, the clear takeaway here is that majorities of every age group approved of the creation of a "behind the counter" class of drugs no matter how it was explained with exception of seniors who were slightly more reticent to allow pharmacists to dispense prescriptions without a doctor's order.

## In Conclusion...

A clear majority of Americans expressed their support for the creation of a third class of medications known as “behind the counter” drugs. A combination of medicines currently available only by prescription and those for sale on store shelves now would be placed behind the pharmacy counter and dispensed by pharmacists without the need for a doctor’s order. More than six-in-ten adults surveyed approved of the proposal generally, as well as of its two distinct components. Americans will certainly need additional information and education on what is a complex topic, but they certainly made their initial interest and support clear – an indication to the FDA and Congress that this is a topic worth further study and serious consideration.