

Poll finds concerns about pace of medical and health research

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Nearly three-quarters of Americans are confident in our system for reviewing the effectiveness and safety of new medicines and medical devices, yet 41% say it takes too long to approve a drug and allow it to be sold to consumers. These are among the findings in a new poll from Research!America.

Three-quarters of Americans accurately named the [Food and Drug Administration](#) (FDA) as the government agency that regulates products such as new drugs and [medical devices](#), and a majority (72%) says they see the FDA a trustworthy source of medical research information.

When asked the most important role of the FDA, 59% say protecting the safety of Americans; 17% say providing accurate information about benefits and risks associated with medicines and medical products; and 7% say regulating companies that produce medicines and [medical products](#).

"Public expectations for medical progress are very high—Americans want new drugs and medical devices delivered faster, and they rightly want safety to be a top priority," said Mary Woolley, president and CEO of Research!America. "To meet these expectations, resources for FDA and our nation's health research agencies—the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—need to keep pace so they can fulfill their missions, and the public needs to let elected officials know how important these issues are."

Woolley noted that the proposed 2011 budgets for FDA, NIH and CDC are not currently slated to keep pace even with inflation, much less with public expectations and scientific opportunity. She said, "We can and must do better."

The poll found very strong support (94%) for the idea that institutions conducting medical and health research—government, universities and private industry—should work together. Americans see such collaboration as leading to greater knowledge, better success rates and faster development of cures and treatments, as well as avoiding duplication and maximizing resources devoted to research and development.

"This underscores the urgency of the public and private sectors working together to bridge gaps and turn more early-stage discoveries into treatments faster," said Gail Cassell, PhD, vice president of scientific affairs at Eli Lilly and Company, which commissioned the poll with Research!America. "Greater collaboration between government agencies is also critical. The new NIH-FDA initiatives to enhance synergism between the two agencies are very important in this regard. The poll data also show the public's strong support of FDA collaborating more with academic centers of excellence to strengthen the agency's expertise and capacity in regulatory science. In order to succeed, it is critical that all sectors involved in research maintain the public's trust and convey to the public more effectively what research has achieved and how much more is possible."

The poll showed that the most trusted sources for medical research information are pharmacists (83% find trustworthy), patient groups (82%), CDC (79%) and their health care providers (78%). Americans also say they trust research information from NIH (61%). Yet only 17% say they regularly check government websites for medical research information, compared to 66% who consult commercial medical sites

such as WebMD.

Additional findings from the poll include:

- After health care costs and insurance issues—which have long been the top health concern for Americans—one in four says the most important health issue facing the U.S. today is obesity (24%), ahead of cancer (11%) and heart disease (5%).
- 76% say clinical research is of great value, and the same number say they are likely to participate in a clinical study, but only 6% say their doctor has ever suggested that they do so.
- 93% say it is important—and 69% say very important—for the U.S. to be a global leader in medical, health and scientific research.
- When asked to name the government agency that funds most of the taxpayer-supported medical research in the U.S., nearly one in five mistakenly named the FDA; fewer than 10% correctly named the NIH.

More information: Complete poll findings are available online at www.researchamerica.org/poll_history

Provided by Research!America

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