



Report of Inaugural Meeting May 5, 2015 | Pew Conference Center, Washington, DC

Representatives from 33 organizations gathered on May 5, 2015 at the Pew Conference Center in Washington, DC for the Inaugural meeting of the [National Consumers League's](#) (NCL) Health Advisory Council.

From consumer and patient groups, government agencies, companies and health care professional organizations, representatives gathered to share their priorities and interests in health issues. The group also began to consider how it could work collaboratively toward improving health care for all Americans.

Sally Greenberg, NCL executive director, reminded the group of the history of NCL's work on consumer issue and long standing ability to convene partners, sometimes with opposing interests. Amy Sonderman, vice president of strategic alliances, reviewed the mission of the Health Advisory Council: to convene a diverse membership to share perspectives, identify common interests, and lay a foundation of support for NCL's health work.

Rebecca Burkholder, vice president of health policy, discussed NCL's current health priorities and also informed the group of major issues of alignment among the nearly three dozen health-focused members part of the Council. The results of a pre-meeting survey, which solicited feedback about health priorities from Council members, showed interests falling into four areas:

1. Medications (Rx and OTC) - Adherence, management and general safe use of medications, as well as safe use of antibiotics
2. Coverage policies and impact on access to care and medications
3. Defining and optimizing the respective roles of health care providers especially those of nurses and pharmacist
4. Improving both patient and health care professional communication skills

With this foundation of potential common areas of interest among the various groups, each member representative was encouraged to briefly report on their

organization's priorities in health advocacy, policy and/or education. Kicking off this portion of the meeting were three members: the Food and Drug Administration, Center for Drug Evaluation and Research, Astellas, and the American Pharmacists Association Foundation (APhA). The FDA emphasized its 2015 priorities, which included implementing new provisions on drug compounding and guidance on opioid formulations; Astellas reported its focus on best practices in patient advocacy, ACA implementation and antibiotics; and the APhA Foundation discussed its program on medication synchronization, [Align My Refills](#).

As discussion progressed, it was clear there were many topics of shared interest. Here are some of the major themes that rose to the surface during the course of the meeting and discussion:

- Access to medications and health care, particularly for minorities, seniors and low-income populations
- Implementation of the Affordable Care Act – helping consumers navigate the exchanges and accessing health care
- Medication synchronization and ease of refills
- Family caregivers – recognition and inclusion on the health care team
- 21st Century Cures – exploring policy solutions for drug discovery, development and delivery
- Patient advocacy and patient-centered drug development
- Safe use of medications (OTC and Rx) –adherence, disposal, and preventing prescription drug abuse
- Antibiotics and antifungals – concerns about resistance, promoting innovation
- Improving health literacy and patient education – empowering patients to make informed decisions
- Improving communication between health care professionals and patients
- Sex differences in health research

Some of these issues are currently highlighted in specific campaigns and activities by Council members. To mention a few:

- National Council on Patient Information and Education (NCPIE) –
 - [Be Medicine Smart](#): For patients, caregivers and healthcare professionals to find helpful educational tools, strategies and resources

- [Talk Before You Take](#): Encouraging consumers to discuss the benefits and risks of prescription medicines
 - [Prescription Abuse Prevention Program](#): Taking action to prevent and address prescription drug abuse
- National Community Pharmacists Associations (NCPA) – [Pharmacists Advancing Medication Adherence](#) (PAMA): Connecting with Patients, Measuring Results
- Consumer Healthcare Products Association (CHPA) –
 - [Up and Away](#): Educational program to remind families of the importance of safe medicine storage
 - [Know Your Dose](#) – Promotes awareness and safe use of acetaminophen
 - [Know Your OTCs](#) – Promotes the safe disposal of medicines
- [Caregiver Action Network](#) and the [National Alliance for Caregiving](#) have worked across the U.S. to promote involvement and empowerment for family caregivers in the health care team
- Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) – [Access Better Coverage](#) (ABC): A consumer education initiative to provide a comprehensive breakdown of health insurance and prescription coverage
- Both the [Society for Women's Health Research](#) and [WomenHeart](#) are promoting greater understanding of the sex differences in disease and medicine.
- Centers for Disease Control (CDC) – [Get Smart About Antibiotics](#): “Know When Antibiotics Work” program offers materials and tools about antibiotic resistance and appropriate antibiotic prescribing
- McNeil Consumer Healthcare – [OTC Literacy](#): A critical approach to educating fifth- and sixth-grade students about medicine safety
- FDA Center for Drug Evaluation and Research – [FDA Drug Safety Podcasts](#). These podcasts provide emerging safety information about drugs in conjunction with the release of Public Health Advisories and other drug safety issues

- FDA Office of Women’s Health – [Office of Women’s Health](#) website provides a wide variety of health resources for women and their families
- Council for Affordable Health Coverage (CAHC)
 - [Prescriptions for a Healthy America](#): A partnership for advancing medication adherence
 - [Clear Choices](#): A movement for informed health care, working to create a transparent, accountable and consumer friendly health care market
- American Colleges of Physicians (ACP) – [High Value Care](#): Program that connects two priorities 1) helping physicians to provide the best possible patient care, and 2) reducing unnecessary costs to the healthcare system
- National Institutes of Health (NIH) – [Adherence Research Network](#): Advancing NIH sponsored adherence research

And a number of state-based organizations — including [North Carolina Alliance for Healthy Communities](#) and [Ohio Pharmacists Association](#) and researchers from [Duke University](#) and [the University of Minnesota](#) — are involved to ensure that the Council stays attuned to the concerns in local communities, outside the DC beltway.

For more details on each member’s priorities and activities, see their organizational websites, or feel free to reach out directly to members. NCL would be pleased to mention additional campaigns and activities in the Quarterly Newsletter.

During this inaugural meeting of the Council, an over-arching theme of the value of partnerships and engaging with others on areas of mutual interest clearly emerged. NCL closed the meeting by emphasizing that potential areas for collaboration in 2015 will continue to be explored and encouraged members to contact NCL with ideas and suggestions.

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And visit the [Health Council page](#) on the [NCL website](#).