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Building Awareness of the Importance of Adherence to Prescription Medicines Baltimore Market

To: National Consumers League

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Research in Baltimore and key markets across the country—from 2011 to the present—shows that there are clear benefits and opportunities linked to increased communication between people who take prescription medications and health care professionals, and use of tools that make it easier to adhere to medications.

Nearly three out of four Americans report that they do not always take their medications as directed. To address this problem, the National Consumers League (NCL) launched *Script Your Future*, a national campaign to raise awareness of the importance of taking medications as directed and to help people with chronic conditions and their health care professionals communicate more effectively about medications. *Script Your Future's* national outreach and targeted efforts in six pilot cities (Baltimore, Birmingham, Cincinnati, Providence, Raleigh, and Sacramento) have reached millions of Americans through hundreds of local events, traditional and social media, educational programs by campaign stakeholders, and the campaign website.

To measure the impact of the campaign over time, NCL commissioned Greenberg Quinlan Rosner (GQR) to conduct surveys of patients in the campaign's pilot cities before the campaign launched, at its midpoint in 2013 and again in 2015.¹

In a survey conducted in May 2015 among adults in the six targeted markets, including Baltimore, most people who take prescription medicines are “convinced that it is important to take [their] medicine” and “understand what will happen to [their] health” if they do not take their medicines exactly as prescribed.

Belief in the importance of adherence to prescription medicine has remained steady and at high levels since the start of the *Script Your Future* campaign in 2011; likewise, reported adherence also remains good. Importantly, those taking medicines in the targeted areas, including Baltimore, are significantly more likely than those in a control market to say they are taking their medicines better than in the previous year.

¹ Please see the Appendix for further details on methodology

Efforts around communications have clearly been beneficial in this campaign. The link between adherence and communications emerged as important early on in the campaign and continues to be crucial; those who report taking medications better than a year ago also are more likely to experience increased communications by health care professionals over the same time period, while those who report a worse job taking medications say they had seen decreased communications. The increase in communications from pharmacists has been particularly notable. Continuing to work to encourage communications between both patients and health care professionals will be an important piece in continuing to promote awareness around adherence to medicine.

The use of tools that increase convenience and communication can also help to continue to raise awareness and raise adherence to prescribed medicines. Americans react positively to a range of tools aimed at making it easier to adhere to prescribed medicines.

Some key findings from the research in the Baltimore area include:

- **Most Baltimore area adults take prescription medications.** Over 6 out of 10 adults (62%) in the Baltimore market area are taking at least one prescription drug.
- **Americans in Baltimore who take prescription medications report a strong awareness and acceptance of the importance of adhering to their medications.** A majority of Americans in Baltimore taking medications (56 percent) strongly agree with the statement “I am convinced that it is important for me to take my medicine.”
- **Self-reported levels of adherence to prescription medications have remained consistently high since 2011. (Figure 1)** More than 9-out-of-10 people who take prescription medicines (96 percent) in Baltimore now say that they “always” or “almost always” take their medicines exactly as instructed by their doctor, nurse, or pharmacist. This is consistent with the high levels of adherence reported in both 2011 and 2013.

■ **Figure 1: Self-Reported Adherence to Prescribed Medicine in Baltimore**

Displaying % who take their medicine exactly as instructed...	2011	2013	2015
Always	62	68	55
Almost always	28	27	41
Sometimes	4	3	3
Rarely	--	--	0
Never	5	1	0
Don't know (vol.)	--	2	--
Total “Always” or “Almost Always”	90	95	96

- **Nearly 1-out-of-4 people taking medications in the Baltimore market say they are taking their medicines better than they were a year ago, significantly higher than in the control market.** In the control market, just 12 percent of those taking medicines say that they were doing a better job taking their medicine as directed compared to a

year ago; in Baltimore, 25 percent of patients note that they are doing a better job with their medicines.

- **Better communication between patients and health care professionals connects to better adherence. (Figure 2)** Those Americans who report taking medications better than a year ago also are more likely to have experienced increased communications with health care professionals during that same time period. Those who say that they are doing a worse job taking medications report a decrease in communications with health care professionals. The case size within the Baltimore market is small so the figure represents the overall data, but we did see similar trends within each individual target market.

■ **Figure 2: Connection between Managing Medicines and Communications**

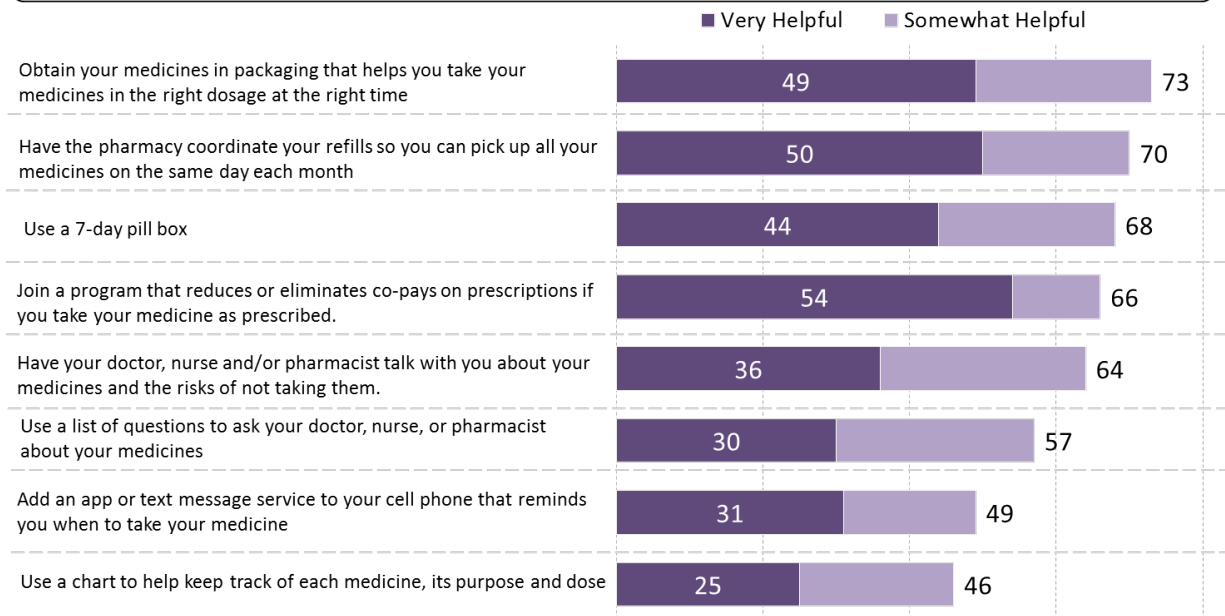
Compared to a year ago, how good of a job are you doing taking your medicine as directed by your doctor, pharmacist or other health care professional ...	Among those reporting <i>increased</i> communications	Among those reporting the <i>same amount of</i> communications	Among those reporting <i>decreased</i> communications
% Better than a year ago	41	15	26
% About the same as a year ago	57	82	48
% Worse than a year ago	2	1	24

- **Americans in Baltimore taking prescription medications report an increase in communications with pharmacists in particular.** Twenty-seven percent of those who take medications report that pharmacists are now more likely to ask about problems with medications “every time” or “occasionally.” This represents a 3-point increase compared to the campaign’s inception. Importantly, the number of individuals in Baltimore who say their pharmacist “never” asks about problems with medications has also decreased since 2011, from 61 percent to 57 percent.
- **Americans in Baltimore respond positively to tools that can help them adhere to medications, particularly those that increase convenience of getting and using medications and ease of communications. (Figure 3)** Majorities of American adults in Baltimore see most of the tools offered as helpful in helping people take medicine correctly. In particular, they see the ability to have pharmacies coordinate refills so they can all be picked up at the same time and packaging that organizes medications in appropriate doses as helpful ways to make taking prescription medicines more convenient. They also respond favorably to tools to ease and improve communications, including having conversations with health care professionals, and bringing question lists to discuss with doctors, nurses, and pharmacists.

■ Figure 3: Tools to Help People Take Medications Correctly

Americans in Baltimore say the most helpful tools center on convenience and personal communication with health care professionals

Q.41-48: A lot of people need help reminding them when to take their medicine and how to take their medicine correctly. I am going to read you a list of tools some people use or things that can be done to help people take their medicine. Thinking specifically about yourself, please tell me whether each of these would be very helpful, somewhat helpful, not very helpful or not at all helpful.



Base: Respondents in Baltimore media market (n=300)

Methodology

Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, Inc. designed and administered this telephone survey conducted by professional interviewers. The survey reached 2,200 adults, 18 years or older; 66 percent of the interviews were conducted on landline telephones and 34 percent of the interviews were conducted by cell phone.

Approximately 300 interviews were conducted in each of 6 target media markets: Baltimore, MD; Birmingham, AL; Cincinnati, OH; Providence, RI; Raleigh-Durham, NC; and Sacramento, CA. An additional 400 interviews were conducted in the Columbus, OH media market as a control. The 2015 results are based on and compared to similar surveys completed in the same media markets in May 2011 and again in October 2013.

The survey was conducted May 19 – 31, 2015. The data were weighted by gender, age, and ethnicity, within each individual media market to ensure an accurate reflection of the population.

The target markets (n=1800) have a margin of error of +/- 2.31 percentage points. Results within each individual market (n=300) have a +/- 5.66 percentage point margin of error; results within the control market (n=400) have a +/- 4.90 percentage point margin of error.

Subgroups within the target market universe are subject to larger margins of error based on their sample sizes. For the population of respondents with a chronic condition and who are taking or supposed to be taking medication (n=1,054), the margin of error is +/- 3.02 percentage points.