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New Poll Shows Adults 50 and Older Are Experiencing Effects of Poor Communication and Coordination in Health Care System

April 8, 2010 – A new survey released today examines the views and experiences of adults 50 and older around quality of care issues. Lake Research Partners conducted the survey on behalf of the *Campaign for Better Care*, a new effort launched by the National Partnership for Women and Families, Community Catalyst, and the National Health Law Program (NHELP) to improve the delivery of health care for older adults. The survey was conducted among a nationally-representative sample of $n = 1,066$ adults ages 50 and older from March 26 through 30, 2010. The margin of sampling error is ± 3 percentage points.

The poll finds adults 50 and older – across the board – say it is important to improve the quality of health care services in the country. These adults are twice as likely to say quality of care has gotten worse rather than better in recent years. A number of their interactions with the health system may be fueling these views – such as having to play the role of a communicator between doctors, having to bring in X-rays, MRIs, or other test results to their doctors, getting conflicting information from different doctors, and their frustrations around not enough time spent with physicians.

Following are key findings:

- Nearly all adults 50 and older (95%) say it is important to improve the quality of health care in the country, and by a two-to-one margin, they say quality has gotten worse rather than better over the past five years (37% vs. 18%).
- Three in four adults 50 and older (74%) say they have wished their doctors talked and shared more information with each other. One in five (20%) says they feel this way frequently.
- Many have experienced effects of a lack of communication and coordination among their health care providers. In the past two years, 29% say they have had to act as a communicator between doctors – having to make sure their doctor knew what another doctor said or prescribed because the doctors were not in contact with each other. Four in ten adults 50 and older with multiple chronic conditions (40%) have had to play this role. Additionally, 20% of adults 50 and older have received conflicting information from different doctors in the past two years. Thirty-percent have had to bring an X-ray, MRI, or other test result with them to a doctor's visit.

- Adults 50 and older also have issues around information exchanges with their doctor. Many (68%) have felt tired of describing their health problems and repeating their medical history every time they go to a doctor or hospital. Nearly three-quarters (73%) say they have wished their doctor had more time to spend talking with and listening to them.
- The poll also shows outcomes related to a lack of accurate or sufficient information exchanged. For example, 60% say they have left a doctor's office or hospital confused about what they are supposed to do when they get home. One in seven (14%) says they have had to go back for an extra doctor's appointment because the doctor did not have all of the information for them.

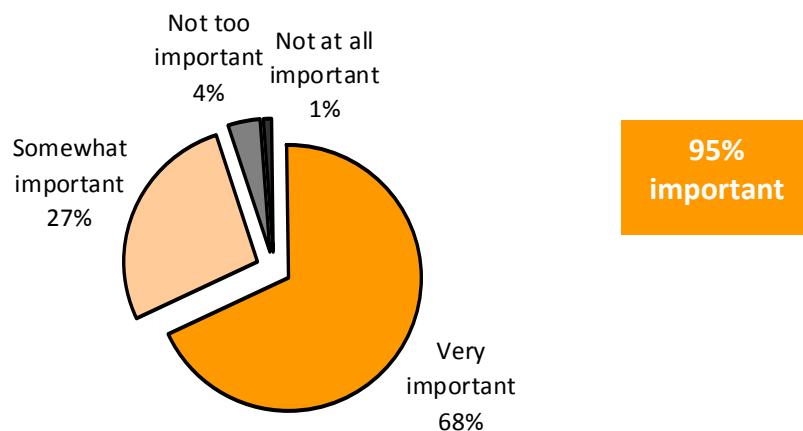
Following are detailed findings from the survey.

Detailed Findings

Nearly all say improving the quality of health care services is important, with more than a third saying quality of care has gotten worse in recent years.

Nearly all adults 50 and older (95%) say it is important to improve quality of health care services in this country. (See Figure 1.) Two-thirds (68%) consider it very important.

Figure 1: Importance of Improving Quality of Health Care Services in Country

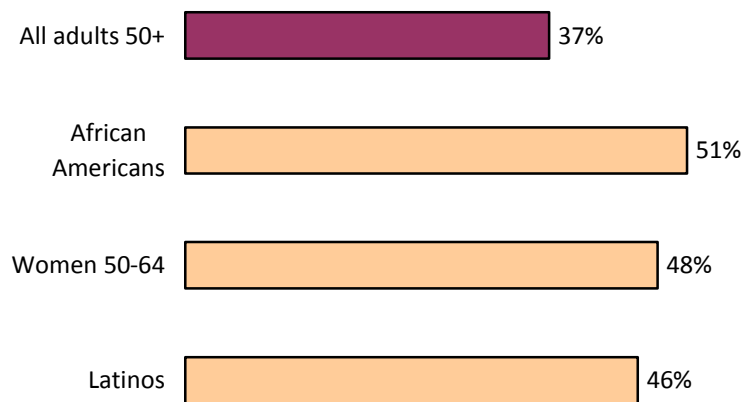


Q. How important do you think it is to improve the quality of health care services in this country?

Thinking about the past five years, 37% of respondents say the quality of health care services has gotten worse compared to 18% of those who say it has gotten better. Forty-four percent says quality has stayed about the same.

African Americans, women between ages 50 and 64, and Latinos are most likely to say quality has worsened in the past five years. (See Figure 2.)

Figure 2: Most Likely to Say Health Care Quality Has Gotten Worse
% saying quality has gotten worse in past five years



Q. Thinking about the past five years, do you think the quality of health care services in this country has gotten better, gotten worse, or stayed about the same?

Additionally, 76% of adults 50 and older say they are worried about the quality of health care services they receive getting worse in the future.

Lack of communication and coordination of care across health care providers is an issue for many adults 50 and older.

Three in four adults 50 and older (74%) say they have wished their doctors talked and shared more information with each other. One in five (20%) says they feel this way frequently.

More than eight in ten heavy users of the health care system (85%) and adults with multiple chronic conditions (81%) have wished their doctors talked and shared more information. (See Figure 3.)

Figure 3: Have Wished Their Doctors Talked and Shared More Information with Each Other



Q. Thinking about when you get medical care, how often do you wish your doctors talked and shared more information with each other? % at least once In a while

** Those who have had five or more doctor visits in the past year, or who have had an overnight stay in the hospital in the past year.*

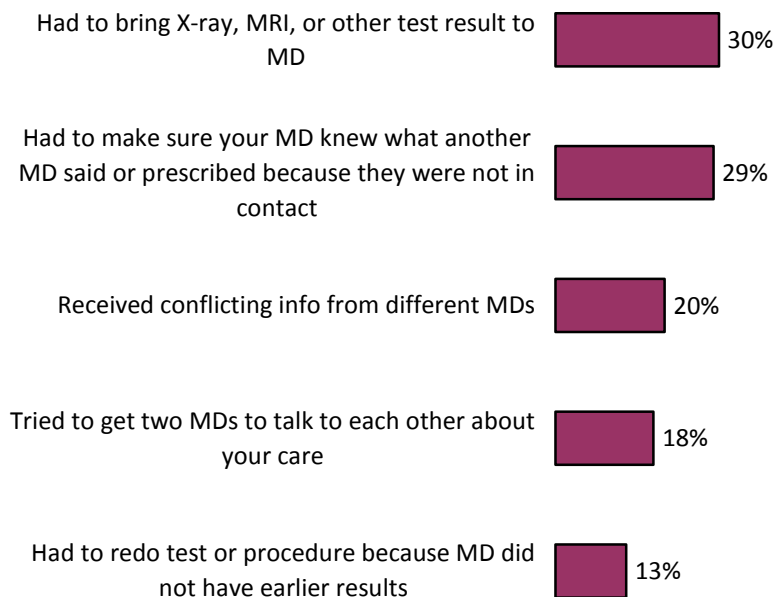
Many adults 50 and older experience outcomes of a lack of communication and coordination among their health care providers.

In the past two years, 29% of adults 50 and older say they have acted as a communicator between doctors – having to make sure that their doctor knew what another doctor said or prescribed because the doctors were not in contact with each other. (See Figure 4.) Respondents with multiple chronic conditions (40%) and the heaviest users of the health care system (45%) are most likely to say they have played this role between doctors. (See Table 1.) Close to one in five adults 50 and older (18%) has take this a step further, trying to get two doctors to talk to each other to share information about their care.

Three in ten respondents (30%) say they have had to bring an X-ray, MRI, or other test result with them to a doctor’s appointment, and one in eight (13%) has had to redo a test or procedure because their doctor did not have the earlier results. Latinos 50 and older (20%) are particularly likely to say they had to redo a test or procedure in the past two years. (See Table 1.)

One in five adults 50 and older (20%) say they have received conflicting information from different doctors in the past two years, and 36% of heavy users of the health system say the same. (See Table 1.)

Figure 4: In the Past Two Years, Was There Ever a Time When You:



Q. In the past two years, was there ever a time when you:

Table 1: Outcomes of Lack of Communication/Coordination Among Providers

<i>% yes in past two years</i>	Brought X-ray, Test into MD	Act as Communicator Btwm MDs	Received Conflicting Info from MDs	Tried to Get 2 MDs to Talk	Had to Redo Test
Total	30%	29%	20%	18%	13%
Men 50-64	25%	29%	22%	19%	18%
Women 50-64	35%	35%	23%	21%	13%
Men 65+	24%	22%	14%	16%	10%
Women 65+	33%	26%	19%	17%	11%
White, non-Hispanic	31%	28%	20%	16%	12%
African Americans	30%	33%	16%	23%	12%
Latinos	20%	27%	28%	29%	20%
No chronic conditions	19%	17%	12%	10%	6%
1 chronic condition	36%	29%	21%	23%	19%
2+ chronic conditions	35%	40%	27%	23%	15%
Heavy users*	44%	45%	36%	28%	13%

* Adults 50 and older who have had 5 or more doctor visits in the past year or an overnight hospital stay

The exchange of information between doctor and patients also poses issues for many adults 50 and older.

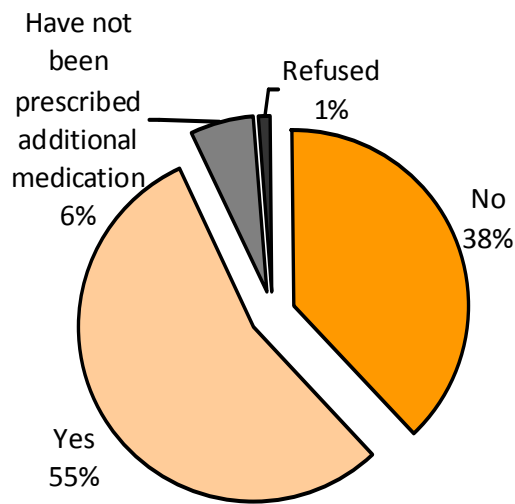
Nearly three in four adults 50 and older (73%) have wished their doctor had more time to spend talking with and listening to them. Additionally, about two-thirds (68%) say they have felt tired of describing their health problems or repeating their medical history every time they go to a doctor's office or hospital.

As a result of information issues, some have had experiences that affect quality of care and have implications for their own health.

Six in ten adults 50 and older (60%) say they have left a doctor's office or hospital feeling unsure about what they are supposed to do when they get home. Three-quarters of heavy users of the health care system (76%) have felt confused about what to do at home. (See Table 2.)

Of adults 50 and older who take at least one prescription medication, 38% say their doctor does not talk to them about potential interactions with other prescription or over-the-counter medications when prescribing a new medication. (See Figure 5.) Four in ten respondents who take five or more prescription medications (40%) say their doctor does not talk to them about potential drug interactions. (See Table 2.)

Figure 5: When Prescribing New Medication, Does Doctor Talk to You About Potential Interactions with Other Prescription or Over-the-Counter Medications?
Among those who regularly take one or more prescription medications



Q. When your doctor prescribes a new medication, does he or she talk to you about any potential interactions with other drugs or over-the-counter medications you might be taking?

As a result of a doctor lacking accurate or sufficient information, one in ten adults 50 and older (10%) says in the past two years they were given the wrong diagnosis about a health problem, and one in twelve (8%) says they were given the wrong medical care. Adults 50 and older who have had an overnight hospital stay are the most likely to experience these outcomes. (See Table 2.)

Finally, one in seven adults 50 and older (14%) says in the past two years they have had to return for an extra doctor's visit because their doctor did not have all of the information for him or her. One in five respondents with multiple chronic conditions (20%) says they have had to go back for an extra doctor visit because of lack of information. (See Table 2.)

Table 2: Implications of Issues around Exchange of Information

	Have Left MD or Hospital Confused	MD Does Not Talk about RX Interactions	Return for Extra MD Visit B/C MD Lacked Info	Given Wrong Diagnosis Because Lacked Info	Given Wrong Care Because MD Lacked Info
Total	60%	33%	14%	10%	8%
Takes 1+ regular Rx's	62%	38%	15%	11%	9%
Takes 5+ regular Rx's	64%	40%	21%	13%	13%
No overnight hospital stay	58%	31%	13%	8%	7%
Overnight hospital stay	71%	45%	18%	18%	16%
No chronic conditions	56%	21%	9%	8%	6%
1 chronic condition	59%	37%	11%	8%	6%
2+ chronic conditions	65%	41%	20%	13%	11%
Heavy users*	76%	47%	17%	13%	11%

* Adults 50 and older who have had 5 or more doctor visits in the past year or an overnight hospital stay

Methodology

Lake Research Partners conducted this survey, administered by Knowledge Networks, among a nationally-representative probability sample of N = 1,066 adults ages 50 and older. The survey was conducted March 26 through 30, 2010. The margin of sampling error for the survey is ± 3.0 percentage points. The sampling error is larger for smaller subgroups within the sample.