

**Medication Disposal:
2009 Survey of Attitudes and Preferences
Among Oregon and Washington State Residents**

Highlights of the Washington Survey

Several agencies and organizations commissioned this survey to assess the practice of and attitudes toward unwanted medication disposal in Washington and Oregon. Gilmore Research conducted telephone surveys of randomly chosen households in Washington State between November 11th and December 9th, 2009. These results are based on 390 responses. The following are highlighted findings from the Washington State survey respondents:

Over half of respondents have six or more medication containers in the home; some are unwanted

- ❑ 93 percent of respondents suggested that they have at least one container of prescriptions or over-the-counter medicine in their households. More than half (52 percent) had six or more.
- ❑ Among respondents with medications in their households, 39 percent suggested that at least one container had expired or would not be used for some other reason.

Many respondents need a safe and secure way to dispose of medications

- ❑ 60 percent of respondents stated that they have needed to dispose of medications.
- ❑ Half of the respondents stated that they have thrown the medications in the trash and 40% disposed of them in the toilet or sink. 12 percent of respondents stated that they had taken the medications back to a pharmacy and 6 percent had yet to dispose of them.
- ❑ 8 percent of respondents have mixed unwanted medications with kitty litter or another substance prior to throwing in the trash.

The majority of respondents are willing to use drop-off or mail-back disposal options

- ❑ Almost three quarters of respondents (72 percent) suggested that they or a household member would either drop-off unused or expired medicines at a free, convenient location or use a free mailer.

Unused medications and narcotics are often left-over following a major illness or death

- ❑ 25 percent of respondents said that following a death or major illness of somebody they know, there were unused narcotics or medication left over.

Medication theft is not uncommon

- ❑ A little less than one in five respondents (18 percent) suggested that they had experienced a situation in which they or someone they know personally had medicines taken from them for use or abuse by someone else.
- ❑ Among respondents who had experienced a situation in which they or someone they know personally had medicines taken from them for use or abuse by someone else, roughly three quarters (77 percent) suggested that the medicines were still in active use at the time, while 11 percent reported the medications were expired or unwanted.

Eight percent of respondents personally knew accidental poisoning and overdose victims

- ❑ A little less than one in ten respondents (8 percent) knew somebody who accidentally poisoned themselves or overdosed on a household medication. Of these respondents 13 percent reported that the medications were expired or unwanted.

The majority of respondents believe that pharmaceutical companies should establish take-back programs

- ❑ Approximately two-thirds of respondents (63 percent) agree that pharmaceutical companies should be responsible for creating take-back programs that will safely dispose of unused medicines, including about four in ten (37 percent) who “strongly agree.”

Additional survey results are available at: <http://www.takebackyourmeds.org/pdf-files/wa-or-pharm-survey-report>.