



**Statement from Betsy Imholz, special projects director, Consumers Union:**

“This poll confirms what Consumers Union's national focus groups of consumers have found: the majority of consumers (65% here) believe their doctors and other providers are relying on scientific evidence of effectiveness of treatment in most of their medical decisions. But the reality is very different--- there's a huge gap between what we know works and what medical care patients receive. Studies show that in the U.S. we get the right medical treatments only about ½ the time.

“Every day, it seems there’s a new study on medical treatments—in fact, there’s medical information overload. This poll illustrates that consumers believe their doctors have it all “under control,” but the reality is that it’s hard for doctors to keep up too and to know which of the sometimes conflicting studies to believe.

“Independent research on drugs, conditions, devices and treatments-- without influence from pharmaceutical companies and device manufacturers -- can help keep busy doctors up on the latest findings. Information on what works can also inform consumers, to make them active participants in their care and give them the tools they need to start a dialogue with their health care provider. It can ensure that they get all the needed treatments, the right treatments, and not more intervention than needed. It can improve health outcomes and potentially save health care dollars. That's why comparative effectiveness is a high priority for Consumers Union.

“This poll illustrates that the overwhelming majority of California patients (89%) agree that getting unnecessary treatments--over-treatment-- is a serious problem, on a par with under-treatment, consumers not getting needed care. They need--and want-- the unbiased information to learn what is the correct treatment. Strong majorities support doctors being required to tell patients if there is strong scientific evidence of what works for a patient's condition (83%) and if there is no evidence for the treatment (81%). They also emphatically want their doctors to have access to comparative effectiveness evidence (89%).

“Consumers Union has taken this on with free comparative effectiveness information on the many classes of prescription drugs. Best Buy Drugs is our free, national public education project that translates independent scientific research on drug safety and effectiveness for lay audiences, with more detailed information for doctors. See [www.crbestbuydrugs.org](http://www.crbestbuydrugs.org). It's been shown to save consumers thousands of dollars each year by switching to lower cost, safe substitutes. And if consumers can afford the drugs, they're more likely to buy and take them. So the lower drug costs help the many consumers who don't even get prescribed medications because they can't afford them.

“This poll shows that confidence in one's own doctor is still strong in California. Armed with the easy-to-understand information consumers confirm they want, they can begin the dialogue with their providers that will result in patients getting the right care and the right medicine at the right time.”