



## **Re-Forming Health Care: Americans Speak Out about Chronic Conditions and the Pursuit of Healthier Lives**

### **National Council on Aging Self-Care Survey Fact Sheet**

With chronic conditions as the central challenge to American health care today, the National Council on Aging (NCOA), with support from The Atlantic Philanthropies and the California HealthCare Foundation (CHCF), commissioned a survey\* to identify gaps in appropriate chronic care, including self-care, to inform the national conversation about health care reform.

The survey, of over 1,000 Americans 44 and older, reveals key findings about the attitudes of Americans with chronic conditions and explores their quality of life, health needs and experiences with the health care system. The survey also identifies barriers to self-care and what is needed to better manage overall health.

#### **Impact of Chronic Conditions**

Many Americans are living with more than one chronic condition, such as heart disease, arthritis, hypertension and/or diabetes. For many of these individuals, their chronic condition(s) have had a significant impact on their quality of life.

- 68% of those surveyed have two or more chronic conditions and 20% are suffering from four or more chronic conditions
- Half of those with chronic conditions say they are unhappy or depressed at least occasionally because of their health problems, and many of these individuals are living in constant or frequent physical pain (32%), are always or frequently tired (34%)
- 32% of those with chronic conditions have had to cut down or skip social activities and 27% are less able to help in their community
- One fourth of people surveyed have had to miss work (26%)

#### **Overstressed Health Care System**

Those surveyed look to the medical system for support and care, but many feel frustrated when interacting with their healthcare providers. Many feel they are not getting the care and support they want and need.

- 44% say they frequently or occasionally wish their doctor had more time to spend talking to them
- 30% say they frequently or occasionally leave a doctor's office or hospital feeling confused about what they should do
- 57% say their health care providers have not asked whether they have help to manage their conditions at home
- 45% report that they rarely or never receive referrals to important chronic care resources such as classes, counselors, dieticians and health educators

#### **Impact of Health Care Costs**

Many adults with chronic conditions are putting off important medical care due to costs.

- One in four Americans 44 and older with chronic conditions has postponed health care or getting prescription medications in the past year because they cannot afford it
- Over one-third (38%) of respondents say they don't have the money it takes to do things that will improve their health. This percent is much higher among Latinos (63%), African Americans (58%), people with annual household incomes below \$20,000 (65%), and people with four or more chronic conditions (59%)

\*Lake Research Partners conducted the survey via telephone January 5 - 30, 2009, among 1,109 Americans age 44 and older nationwide, who have at least one chronic condition. The margin of sampling error for the total results is + 2.9 percentage points. Margin of error is greater when analyzing smaller subgroups within the sample.