

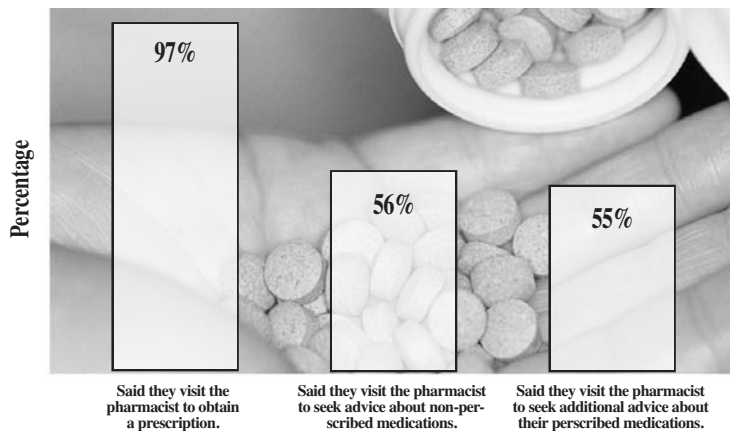


# Poll STATION

With Linda Banister

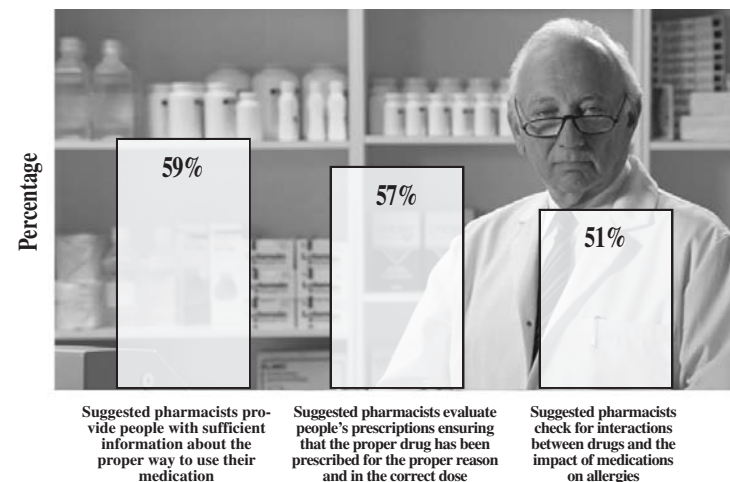
**O**n April 1, 2007 new legislation came into effect that allows pharmacists in Alberta to expand the scope of services they offer. Perhaps the most significant change is that pharmacists now have the authority to prescribe drugs in partnership with other health professionals, after a diagnosis or decision for treatment has been made. Pharmacists can adapt a prescription (e.g., use a liquid form instead of a tablet), prescribe in an emergency, or manage ongoing drug therapy. In this month's *Poll Station*, we asked people about their interactions with pharmacists and their awareness about the roles of pharmacists.

## WHY DID YOU VISIT A PHARMACIST IN THE PAST YEAR?



To begin, survey participants were asked to describe the kinds of interactions they have had with a pharmacist over the previous year. Not surprisingly, 97 percent visited a pharmacist to obtain medication prescribed by their doctor or another health professional. Just over half (56 percent) visited a pharmacy to ask questions or seek advice about non-prescription medication. A similar proportion (55 percent) sought additional advice about medication they had been prescribed. One-quarter of respondents visited a pharmacist to safely dispose of old or unused medication.

## WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE THE ROLE OF PHARMACISTS?



Respondents were then asked to describe what came to their mind as the role of a pharmacist, unaided by the interviewer. Fifty-nine percent suggested pharmacists provide people with sufficient information about the proper way to use their medication. A similar proportion (57 percent) indicated that pharmacists evaluate people's prescriptions ensuring that the proper drug has been prescribed for the proper reason and in the correct dose. Over half (51 percent) said pharmacists check for interactions between drugs and the impact of medications on allergies.

Next, interviewers described the various roles of a pharmacist to survey participants and asked if they were aware that these elements were part of a pharmacist's duties. Almost all—97 percent—knew they were to provide people with sufficient information about the proper way to administer medication. Ninety percent knew they explain what to expect when taking medication, while 82 percent were aware pharmacists check for interactions that may occur with other drugs, foods, or allergies. About three-quarters (76 percent) knew they evaluate the prescriptions to ensure the drug is appropriate and in the correct dose, while more than two-thirds (68 percent) were aware their role is to confirm personal information to ensure the accuracy of health records.

## ARE PHARMACISTS IMPORTANT TO YOU HEALTH?

Finally, respondents were asked to indicate the importance of pharmacists in relation to their overall health care. Over two-thirds (68 percent) said pharmacists are highly important while 11 percent rated pharmacists as being of low importance in terms of their overall health care. In keeping with that mindset, 79 percent thought it was important to develop a relationship with a particular pharmacist so that he or she knew them, their history, and their current medications.

The *Poll Station* surveyed 100 City of Edmonton residents on the topic and, while the results of the research are not statistically reliable, they do provide a qualitative indication of what Edmontonians are thinking. ✓

*Linda Banister is a certified management consultant and the owner of Banister Research and Consulting Inc., a full service provider of market research and program evaluation services. Want a question included in the Edmontonians Poll? Contact Linda at 780.451.4444 or e-mail at lbanister@edmontonians.com. Visit [www.banister.ab.ca](http://www.banister.ab.ca).*