

Spotlight on Health Care



More Patients Struggling To Pay For Their Medicines *Expanded Assistance Programs Can Keep Needed Medicines In Reach*

(NAPSA)—In today's difficult economic times, with unemployment levels near 10 percent and nearly 50 million Americans without insurance, many people in need are forced to make decisions on whether to pay for essentials, such as food and utilities, or their prescription medicines. For patients with chronic conditions such as diabetes or asthma, this can leave them without treatment that is critical to their health and well-being. However, many do not realize that they may qualify for patient assistance programs that can provide them with free medications.

For more than 50 years, Merck has helped millions of Americans gain access to its medicines and vaccines. Recently, Merck significantly expanded the number of medicines available through its Merck Helps™ patient assistance programs, as well as increased the income limit so even more people are eligible—including families of four earning up to \$88,200 annually.

Unfortunately, awareness of these programs is low, yet the need remains great. A recent survey, conducted by Harris Interactive on behalf of Merck*, found that while 32 percent of U.S. adults are potentially eligible for patient assistance programs, 79 percent of those unemployed and uninsured are somewhat or not at all aware that such programs exist. To help increase awareness, Merck has provided a grant to NeedyMeds, a nonprofit organization that makes information about these programs available to people in need.

“People should always have access to the prescription medicines they need, even if they don't have insurance. We know that many patients who are eligible for these programs aren't taking advantage of them—because awareness is low, particularly among those who are most in need,” said Richard Sagall, M.D., co-founder of NeedyMeds. “That's why we're so pleased to partner with Merck to help further raise awareness.”

With the Merck Helps programs, there are no application fees, no co-payments and a simple enrollment process. Many medicines can be delivered to a patient's home or doctor's office at no charge. Patients in need of information should visit www.MerckHelps.com or call (800) PAP-5400.

Did You Know:

- A recent Harris Interactive survey found more than one-third (35 percent) of those who are uninsured and unemployed did not buy or refill prescription medicines, cut their dosage in half or took expired medicine as a way to save money.
- The Merck Helps patient assistance programs provide Merck medicines and vaccines free of charge to eligible individuals (primarily the uninsured) who, without assistance, cannot afford needed Merck medicines.
- While 32 percent of U.S. adults are potentially eligible for patient assistance programs, 79 percent of those unemployed and uninsured are somewhat or not at all aware that such programs exist.



+ This telephone survey was conducted by Harris Interactive on behalf of Merck from August 20 to 23, 2010 among 2,012 U.S. adults of whom 549 do not have any prescription drug benefits and 131 do not have any prescription drug benefits and are not employed.