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OHIOANS WANT MORE SPENT ON PREVENTION RESEARCH

Ninety-nine percent of Ohioans believe cancer research should be a top or high priority.

Columbus, Ohio—May 26, 2004—Seventy percent of Ohio residents feel the current amount spent to protect and promote their health through public health research—about 1 cent of every U.S. health care dollar—is too little, according to a poll released today.

Cancer will afflict 40 percent of Ohioans at some point in their lives. One out of every three women and one out of two men will face cancer in their lifetime, according to the Ohio Cancer Incidence Surveillance System.

“We know tobacco smoking is responsible for 80 to 85 percent of lung cancer,” said J. Nick Baird, MD, director of the Ohio Department of Health. “And we know severe sunburns as a child and unprotected exposure to strong sunlight are causes of skin cancer. But there are still as many questions about the different types of cancer as there are about other preventable diseases and conditions. This poll shows that Ohioans want those answers.”

This poll of more than 800 Ohioans was conducted on behalf of Research!America’s Prevention Research Initiative in partnership with the Ohio Department of Health and The Ohio State University School of Public Health. Over the next year, the partnership will conduct a number of educational programs to increase awareness and support for public health research.

“These findings are important because they underscore Ohioans’ support for prevention and public health research,” said Stanley Lemeshow, PhD, dean of The Ohio State University School of Public Health.

Ohioans also said they are willing to support an increase in the state’s investment in health promotion and public health research. Seventy-eight percent support the use of a portion of lottery sales revenues, and the same percentage support the creation of a state tax return check-off for voluntary donations to health research. More than two-thirds (67 percent) support increasing the state’s tax on alcohol, and an equal number favor increasing the state’s tax on cigarettes and other tobacco products to support prevention research.

The findings released today include:

- Cancer was top on the minds of Ohioans when asked about disease research, even though cancer is the number two killer in Ohio behind heart disease. Ninety-nine percent of Ohioans believe cancer research should be a top or high priority.
- Behind cancer, heart disease should be a top or high priority, 96 percent of Ohioans said. Ninety-two percent felt the same way about diabetes, Alzheimer’s disease and respiratory diseases such as asthma. HIV and AIDS came in at 90 percent.

An overwhelming majority (93 percent) of Ohioans report they consider public health programs that protect them by safeguarding food, providing necessary vaccines for children, ensuring the safety of the elderly in nursing homes, and preparing for possible acts of bioterrorism and other emergencies to be important or very important to them. Additionally, two out of three (66 percent) say it is very important to conduct research to understand and reduce the higher rates of diabetes, heart disease and infant mortality among lower-income families and among minorities.

“Our residents make the connection between the health of their community, friends and neighbors with the services provided by the public health system,” said Baird. “It is not surprising they want those protections to be in place and support increased investment in research to find better ways to protect and promote health of all Ohioans.”

Eighty-five percent of those polled say they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who supports increased funding for research to find cures for and prevent disease. Support for job creation (91 percent) and support for education (89 percent) were the only issues that ranked higher when choosing candidates. Increasing access to health care, including prescription drugs, was also important (85 percent). Health services and health education programs (82 percent) complete the top five issues. Support for an increase in funding to protect natural resources and the environment (74 percent) and homeland security (73 percent) are issues that would make nearly three in four Ohioans more likely to vote for a candidate.

When considering how the state’s tobacco settlement funds should be spent, 91 percent of Ohio residents said monies should go to the treatment of chronic diseases such as cancer, diabetes and heart disease. Eighty-eight percent said the funds should be put toward research to find cures for and prevent all diseases. Eighty-two percent thought that the money should be used for programs and services to protect and promote health, such as reducing deaths due to heart disease, reducing birth defects through health education, and making workplaces safer. Three-quarters (75 percent) thought a portion of the funds should be used for the treatment of smoking-related health problems, and 73 percent thought money should go to programs to prevent tobacco use.

“Prevention research helps improve our quality of life and enables all people to have healthier futures,” said Mary Woolley, president of Research!America. “Clearly, Ohio residents understand the value of public health and prevention research and want it to receive the necessary funding so that all citizens can be assured of those benefits.”

Research!America is a not-for-profit, membership-supported public education and outreach alliance founded in 1989 to make medical and health research—including research to prevent disease, disability and injury and to promote health—a much higher national priority.

Harris Interactive® conducted the 15-minute poll by telephone with 801 Ohio adult residents ages 18 and over between March 29 and April 19, 2004. The survey data were weighted by age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, income, Metropolitan Statistical Area, household size and the number of telephone lines in the household to reflect the demographic composition of the Ohio population using the Current Population Survey from the U.S. Census Bureau.

The results have a statistical precision of plus or minus 4 percentage points of what they would be if the entire population of Ohio had been polled.

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