

# Questions and Answers

## Medical Provider Component

M E D I C A L   E X P E N D I T U R E   P A N E L   S U R V E Y

PHARMACY

### What is the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS)?

MEPS is a nationwide research study conducted to learn more about the health care services people use, the charges for those services and the sources that pay for them. MEPS is conducted annually by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services through the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Major components of MEPS include surveys of:

- A nationally representative sample of households;
- Hospitals, physicians, home care providers, and pharmacies reported by the household participants; and
- Providers of health insurance.

MEPS is the most complete source of data available on health care use and expenses in the United States and is used by government policymakers and private researchers.

### How are pharmacies chosen for the MEPS Pharmacy Component?

Pharmacies were named by respondents in the household data collection as sources of prescribed drugs during 2009. These household respondents signed HIPAA-compliant forms authorizing and requesting each of their pharmacies to release the information sought by the study.

### Why should this pharmacy participate?

Prescription medicines are a major component of health care costs. The information that you supply will supplement that given by your customer and help us build a more complete picture of health care expenditures for respondents in our study. Your customers have asked specifically for your help by signing the authorization form.

### What information is needed?

For each of the customers on the enclosed list, we need this information about their 2009 prescriptions:

- Date filled
- Payment sources and amounts
- NDC code
- Quantity dispensed

### How do I know the information will be kept confidential?

The confidentiality of data collected for MEPS is

protected by Federal law under Sections 934(c) and 308(d) of the Public Health Service Act [42 U.S.C. 299c-3(c) and 242m(d)] and will be kept private to the extent permitted by law. Identifying information collected for the study cannot be released for another purpose without the permission of the individuals or establishments who provided the information or are described in it.

Personal identifying information such as names or addresses are removed before information from the study is made available to researchers. Findings are published in statistical summaries and tables and micro-data is released on “public use” data files.

### Who is collecting this data?

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has chosen RTI International (RTI) and Social and Scientific Systems, Inc. (SSS) to administer the study. A professionally trained data collection specialist from RTI-SSS will contact each pharmacy.

### What questions will the data collected answer?

MEPS data provide answers to many important questions. For example:

- How much of prescription costs are covered by insurance?
- What do people pay out of pocket for medications?
- What medicines are people receiving?
- What types of medications are not covered by insurance plans?

### Any further questions?

Please call toll-free, at  
[FILL APPROPRIATE RTI/SSS  
NUMBER: 1-800-XXX-XXXX.]

For direct access to information  
about MEPS, go to  
<http://www.meps.ahrq.gov>.