



# ABSTRACT

## Consumer perceptions on supply of and access to Pharmacy Medicines

**Researchers:** Healthcare Management Advisors

### Abstract:

**Background:** This project was designed to collect some of the data required by the National Coordinating Committee on Therapeutic Goods to assess restrictions on access to over-the-counter medicines (currently available in Australia as Schedule 2 (S2-Pharmacy Medicine), Schedule 3 (S3-Pharmacist Medicine) or unscheduled products). The aims were to assess current use of and consumer perceptions regarding access to Schedule 2 (S2) medicines in Australia.

**Materials and methods:** The research involved two data collection methods: a general population survey conducted via computer assisted telephone interview (CATI) on 12 month recall of purchase behaviour; and face-to-face surveys in pharmacies with pharmacy staff and purchasers of S2 medicines.

**Results:** A total of 4,500 CATI respondents, 150 pharmacies and 734 in-pharmacy consumers participated in the project. Between 21.1% and 56.8% of the CATI population had purchased an S2 medicine in the previous year, with only 1.3% not purchasing despite seeking to use an S2 medicine. S2 purchase was not associated with geographic location, perceived high cost or difficulty with access, but was associated with whether consumers minded talking to pharmacy staff about their condition (chi-squared=333.9,  $p<0.0001$ ), age (chi-squared=221.14,  $p<0.0001$ ), gender (chi-squared=137.59,  $p<0.0001$ ) and annual household income (chi-squared=158.21,  $p<0.0001$ ). Although only 28.6% of S2 purchasers were seeking advice at a single occasion of purchase, 66.5% of S2 purchasers recall seeking advice in the previous 12 months. A total of 87.9% of purchasers report recalling advice when using the product and over 85% are satisfied with level of pharmacy advice. Approximately 80% of purchasers want continued availability of advice with S2 medicines. Although 55.1% of purchasers of S2 medicines believe that these medicines should not be more widely available at places like supermarkets without availability of advice, 33.5% did agree with this proposition (remainder undecided).

**Conclusions:** Australian consumers generally have little difficulty accessing S2 medicines, although males and those aged 18-24 years who mind talking to pharmacy staff about their condition, along with those from lowest income households, are least likely to be purchasers of S2 medicines. A clear majority of purchasers are satisfied with the level of pharmacy advice provided and want this to remain available in the future, although one third of consumers would like broader availability of S2 medicines even without advice provision.