

♥ HEART HEALTH

Listen to Your Doctor For a Healthy Heart

(NAPSA)—Despite heightened awareness about high blood pressure and its contributions to serious cardiovascular diseases such as heart attack and stroke, many patients are still not taking appropriate action to treat their condition.

Unfortunately, according to the National Institutes of Health, two-thirds of Americans don't have their blood pressure under control. In fact, while people with hypertension are aware of the health risks, a new survey of more than 500 hypertensive adults shows that many aren't following their doctor's treatment and lifestyle suggestions.

Even though more than half of respondents acknowledge that not following their doctors' instructions puts them at high risk for heart attack or stroke, one in three fails to stick to his or her medication regimen, and 80 percent disregard the lifestyle changes recommended by their doctor. However, nearly half believe they could be more motivated to try to control their hypertension with added encouragement and emotional support from their doctor.

"Patient adherence is an ongoing challenge, especially when dealing with hypertension, which is often described as the 'silent killer' since the disease frequently does not produce physical symptoms. Patients often look and feel fine, and they may not sense the urgency in controlling their blood pressure day to day," said Brent M. Egan, MD, professor of medicine and pharmacology at the Medical University of South Carolina. "It's critical that patients and health care professionals



Following your doctor's treatment recommendations is a key component to leading a heart-healthy life.

work together to establish realistic treatment goals, and that health care professionals positively reinforce patients to help them achieve optimal blood pressure control."

Hypertension is the most common reason for seeing a physician in the United States, with 35 million office visits citing hypertension as the primary diagnosis. It affects 50 million Americans—one in four adults—and is a major risk factor for heart disease and a risk factor for stroke and heart failure. The disease disables more than one million Americans each year and is responsible for 52 million lost workdays.

The above-mentioned survey, called Hypertension Education Awareness Recognition and Treatment (HEART), was conducted in late 2003 and sponsored by AstraZeneca, maker of medications for hypertension, heart failure and angina.

To learn more about what you can do to achieve your heart-healthy goals, go to www.hearthorizons.com.