

New Survey Shows Most Americans Have Never Heard of Sepsis, Despite Sepsis Being Most Costly Hospital Condition in the U.S.

Despite a high mortality rate and over \$20 billion in annual healthcare costs, sepsis recognition rates among adults remain surprisingly low. However, a new study sheds light on the sources of awareness, with news and entertainment programs becoming powerful tools in the fight to increase sepsis awareness.

September 02, 2014 03:00 AM Eastern Daylight Time

SAN DIEGO--([BUSINESS WIRE](#))--While diseases like Ebola, flesh-eating bacteria, and MRSA have quickly cemented their place in America's consciousness, a disease that kills more than 258,000 Americans every year continues to fall short in recognition and awareness: sepsis.

In a [recent study](#) conducted by Harris Poll on behalf of Sepsis Alliance in June 2014, only 44 percent of Americans had ever even heard of sepsis. The survey polled 2,100 U.S. adults 18+ and discovered that women (47 percent) were more likely than men (40 percent) to have heard of sepsis, as were those 35 years or older (48 percent) versus those younger than 35 (35 percent).

A similar survey in 2013 found an identical percentage of Americans recognizing sepsis, confirming that most American adults are not familiar with sepsis, despite a 2013 statistical brief from a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that singled out sepsis as being the most expensive health condition to treat, costing America's healthcare system over \$20 billion every year.

For the first time, the Sepsis Alliance survey asked those Americans that had heard of sepsis where they heard about it. Twenty-five percent of respondents recalled learning about sepsis from news and entertainment programs, while 15 percent recalled learning from medical professionals. Thirteen percent of respondents became familiar with sepsis after knowing someone who had sepsis or having it themselves.

"It was surprising to learn that a quarter of the respondents who knew about sepsis had learned about it through news and entertainment programs," said [Thomas Heymann](#), Executive Director of Sepsis Alliance. "The new Sepsis Alliance survey demonstrates the power of the media and the important role it can play in helping raise awareness of this disease."

CDC Director Highlights the Need to Raise Awareness

Sometimes referred to as blood poisoning, sepsis is the body's often-deadly response to infection. The [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) has reported that sepsis cases have increased in the U.S. from 621,000 in the year 2000 to 1,141,000 in 2008. When these cases are spotted and treated early with fluids and antibiotics, thousands of lives can be saved, resulting in billions being saved in healthcare costs.

“Sepsis is devastating to patients and their families. This survey tells us that there is much more work needed to raise awareness,” said Dr. Tom Frieden, Director of the CDC. “CDC is committed to protecting patients by increasing sepsis awareness, enhancing prevention and early detection, and improving treatment.”

September is Sepsis Awareness Month

Sepsis Alliance announced the results of this survey as the official start of Sepsis Awareness Month. During the month of September, Sepsis Alliance, volunteers, and health organizations across the country are combining their efforts to raise sepsis awareness. World Sepsis Day will take place on September 13, 2014, and Sepsis Alliance will be hosting its annual [Sepsis Heroes](#) event in New York City on September 18, 2014. Sepsis Alliance has also released a [calendar of events](#) to help individuals find and participate in events happening across the country.

“We have a record number of partners participating in this year’s Sepsis Awareness Month,” added Heymann, “but these survey results prove there is still a lot of work that needs to be done. Increasing awareness in the general public is essential in helping people advocate for their own health care, stopping this deadly disease in its tracks.”

Abbreviated Methodology

This [survey](#) was conducted online within the United States by Harris Poll on behalf of Sepsis Alliance from June 19-23, 2014 among 2,100 adults ages 18 and older. This online survey is not based on a probability sample and therefore no estimate of theoretical sampling error can be calculated. For complete survey methodology, including weighting variables, please contact Sepsis Alliance at 619-232-0300.

About Sepsis Alliance

Sepsis Alliance is the leading nonprofit patient advocacy organization in the U.S. promoting awareness of sepsis. Sepsis Alliance’s mission is to save lives by raising awareness of sepsis as a medical emergency. The organization hosts national events, distributes information, and conducts training and education of sepsis and its devastating effects. Sepsis Alliance also provides support by giving people affected by sepsis a forum to share information. Sepsis Alliance is registered as a 501(c)(3) charitable organization, and is a founding member of the Global Sepsis Alliance. For more information on Sepsis Alliance, please visit www.sepsisalliance.org.

About Nielsen & The Harris Poll

On February 3, 2014, Nielsen acquired Harris Interactive and The Harris Poll. Nielsen Holdings N.V. (NYSE: NLSN) is a global information and measurement company with leading market positions in marketing and consumer information, television and other media measurement, online intelligence and mobile measurement. Nielsen has a presence in approximately 100 countries, with headquarters in New York, USA and Diemen, the Netherlands. For more information, visit www.nielsen.com.

Contacts

Sepsis Alliance

Scott Carr, 619-232-0300

Scarr@sepsisalliance.org