
NEW POLL: MOST ORTHOPEDIC SURGEONS BELIEVE THE FDA IS “TOO SLOW” IN APPROVING NEW DRUGS AND MEDICAL DEVICES

Washington, DC (January 30, 2007) – A recent nationwide survey of orthopedic surgeons conducted on behalf of the Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI) by **the polling company™, inc.** found an alarming level of concern about the impact on patients wrought by the United States Food and Drug Administration’s sluggish approval process for new drugs and medical devices¹.

A full three-quarters (75%) of the doctors surveyed pronounced the FDA’s approval process “too slow,” and 60% reported that, on balance, the regulations imposed by the FDA had *hindered* them in using “promising new drugs and medical devices” to treat patients. This is nearly twice the 31% who felt such measures had *helped* them. The newest orthopedic surgeons (those in practice 12 years or less) were notably more downcast about the FDA than were their longer practicing colleagues. These results demonstrated a more negative view of the FDA – and the harm its inaction may bring to patients – than expressed by oncologists, cardiologists, emergency room physicians, and neurologists/neurosurgeons polled in previous surveys.

“The level of discontent with the FDA expressed by these orthopedic surgeons is startling,” said pollster Kellyanne Conway. “Professionals often accord their colleagues some deference and a dose of blind faith.”

Additionally, orthopedic surgeons drew a direct nexus between the FDA’s delayed approval process and patient harm. **Some 73% of them asserted that the “additional time it takes for the FDA to approve new drugs and medical devices hurts patients by forcing them to go without potentially beneficial therapies.”** This is nearly triple the number who disagreed (25%).

The belief that foot-dragging at the FDA results in harm to patients was not a hypothetical; based on their actual experience as orthopedic surgeons, 78% of them recalled specific instances where the slow FDA approval process had hindered their own ability to treat patients “at least once.” This is more than five-times the 14% who claimed that FDA had never adversely affected their care of patients.

In another question, a clear majority (70%) of orthopedic surgeons would favor “a proposal to change FDA law so that unapproved drugs or medical devices could be made available to physicians as long as they carried a warning label about their unapproved status.” Approximately one-quarter (26%) of orthopedic surgeons opposed this idea. Again, orthopedic surgeons in the first decade or so of their careers were more adamant about this change than were those practicing longer. This is a particularly important finding given that as the 77 million Baby Boomers continue to age, the demand for orthopedic surgeons will continue to grow.

Finally, if it were up to the orthopedic surgeons surveyed, Vioxx, the prescription medication used to alleviate the pain associated with arthritis, would be back on the market. **A full 80% said they would “make Vioxx available again as a prescription drug,”** compared to just 14% who would like the medication to remain off-limits. Vioxx was withdrawn in 2004 after a study found it led elevated risk for heart attach and stroke.

For more information about this study and the chance to ask questions about the results, please join our conference call this morning (Tuesday, January 30) at 11:30am:

DIAL-IN #: 1.866.409.4300 | PASSCODE: 3312252

For a full analysis of the results and comparisons to past polls, please visit: <http://www.cei.org/pdf/5732.pdf>

¹ Online survey of 175 orthopedic surgeons nationwide fielded December 28, 2006-January 3, 2007. Margin of error +/- 7.4%.