



## COALITION TO PREVENT DVT DVT AWARENESS AMONG CANCER PATIENTS SURVEY FACT SHEET

Focusing attention on patient groups at high risk for deep-vein thrombosis (DVT), the Coalition to Prevent DVT has found that a majority of people with cancer were not aware of an increased risk for DVT and its potentially fatal complication, pulmonary embolism (PE), nor had they discussed their risk with their healthcare provider, according to a survey released by the Coalition.

DVT is a common but serious medical condition that occurs when a blood clot forms in a deep vein, usually in the calf or thigh, and either partially or completely blocks the flow of blood in the vein. The condition may result in health complications, such as a PE, if a fragment of the clot breaks loose from the wall of the vein and travels to the lungs.<sup>1</sup>

DVT/PE affects approximately 2 million Americans and kills up to 300,000 people in the U.S. each year—more than AIDS and breast cancer combined.<sup>2,3</sup> People who suffer from other health conditions such as cancer, heart disease or obesity, may have a heightened risk of developing a DVT or PE.<sup>4</sup> In fact, up to 20 percent of all cases of DVT and PE occur in cancer patients.<sup>5</sup>

The Coalition to Prevent Deep-Vein Thrombosis – through Penn Schoen Berland – conducted an online survey of 1,000 cancer patients including current cancer patients and those in remission to assess the overall awareness and perceptions of the dangers of DVT.<sup>6</sup>

Survey results showed cancer patients are informed about DVT, in general, but are not aware of their increased risk associated with cancer:

- Nearly 70 percent of survey respondents had heard of DVT prior to taking the survey, but of those with cancer currently undergoing treatment – the subset for whom the information is most relevant – only 16 percent think they are at high risk of developing a DVT blood clot.
- 86 percent of respondents, which includes people currently being treated for cancer and those in remission, had neither heard of nor read anything about DVT blood clots in connection with cancer and its treatment.
- Only 20 percent of respondents who had heard of DVT tried to find information about signs and symptoms on their own since their cancer diagnosis.
- Only 25 percent of respondents were concerned about blood clots or DVT as a side effect of cancer or cancer treatment.

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<sup>1</sup> Goldhaber SZ. Deep vein thrombosis: advancing awareness to protect patient lives. White paper. American Public Health Association; Public Health Leadership Conference: Washington, DC: Feb. 26, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Heit JA, Cohen AT, Anderson FA et al on behalf of the VTE Impact Assessment Group. Estimated annual number of incident and recurrent, non-fatal and fatal venous thromboembolism (VTE) events in the U.S. Poster 68 presented at: American Society of Hematology, 47th Annual Meeting, Atlanta, GA, December 10-13, 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Gerotziafas GT, Samama MM. "Prophylaxis of venous thromboembolism in medical patients." *Current Opinion in Pulmonary Medicine*. September 2004;10,5,356-365.

<sup>4</sup> Geerts WH, Pineo GF, Heit JA, et al. Prevention of venous thromboembolism: The Seventh ACCP Conference on Antithrombotic and Thrombolytic Therapy. *Chest*. 2004;126(suppl):338S-400S.

<sup>5</sup> Lyman, Gary H. et al. American Society of Clinical Oncology Guideline: Recommendations for Venous Thromboembolism Prophylaxis and Treatment in Patients with Cancer. *J Clin Oncol* 2007 25:5490-5505.

<sup>6</sup> Online survey of 1,000 cancer patients (margin of error ±3.1%), conducted by Penn Schoen Berland, January 13 - 22, 2012.



An overwhelming majority of patients indicated that they sought their doctors' guidance, but few had actually discussed DVT or its risk factors with them:

- Fewer than 1 in 3 respondents had discussed DVT blood clots with a healthcare professional.
- Nearly 3 in 4 respondents (73 percent) were not informed by their healthcare professional of their increased risk of DVT with cancer.
- Prior to receiving cancer treatment, fewer than 1 in 4 had discussed prevention of DVT blood clots with their healthcare professional.
- 82 percent of respondents indicated that physicians have the greatest influence on their healthcare decisions.

The survey results point to an ongoing need for education and awareness about how patients with co-morbidities can reduce their risk for DVT. The Coalition encourages healthcare professionals to educate patients about the risk factors, signs and symptoms and complications of DVT and PE.