



NEWS RELEASE

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PUBLIC HEALTH MANAGEMENT CORPORATION'S HOUSEHOLD HEALTH SURVEY FINDS OLDER ADULTS FACE DIFFICULT HEALTH CHOICES

August 21 marks National Senior Citizens Day; Study Raises Awareness of Issues the Elderly Face in Southeastern PA

PHILADELPHIA—August 21 marks National Senior Citizens Day, which aims to honor and celebrate our nation's elderly. Unfortunately, many of our region's most vulnerable older adults feel forced to make choices that can negatively impact their health, according to data released today from the 2012 Southeastern Pennsylvania Household Health Survey, an annual survey by Public Health Management Corporation (PHMC) Center for Data Innovation. The survey, which was conducted among 10,000 households in Southeastern Pennsylvania, offers regional insights into the challenges many older adults face when it comes to basic needs, prescriptions and food.

The survey revealed that economically insecure older adults trying to balance meeting basic needs may feel compelled to make decisions with harmful health consequences, such as taking less medication than prescribed, forgoing treatment entirely, or buying less food. According to the survey:

- Approximately **112,500** older adults have either cut/skipped a meal or left a prescription unfilled, due to budgetary constraints in the past year.
- Approximately **20,900** individuals report both cutting a meal and not filling a prescription because of a limited budget.
- Approximately **two in three (66.8%)** older adults who report both cutting a meal and forgoing filling a prescription medication have been diagnosed with high blood pressure and **one-half (49.9%)** have been diagnosed with diabetes.

Poor nutrition among older adults can exacerbate medical conditions and debilitation, decrease immune system function and lead to increased need for medical attention. Similarly, non-adherence with medication regimens is a serious concern, particularly among those with chronic health conditions. Patients who do not take their medications as prescribed may be putting themselves at additional risk for negative - and potentially lethal - health consequences.

One barrier to adherence among the elderly is a lack of education about resources. Many older adults require assistance in fully accessing all available public benefits (prescription insurance coverage, SSI, SNAP/food stamps, affordable housing) and personal finance management.

Regionally, nonprofit organizations like The Center for Advocacy for the Rights and Interests of the Elderly (CARIE) are helping to improve health outcomes and quality of life for our region's elderly. Setting CARIE apart from others in the aging field is its sole focus on advocacy through a comprehensive array of activities, community education programs, professional training and consultation, and referral using a client-centered approach.

For more information about these findings, please contact Lisa Kleiner at lisa@phmc.org.

About Public Health Management Corporation Center for Data Innovation

Public Health Management Corporation (PHMC) is a nonprofit public health institute that creates and sustains healthier communities. The center includes the Community Health Data Base (CHDB) and its annual Household Health Survey, one of the largest regional health surveys in the country. The Pew Charitable Trusts, William Penn Foundation, United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania, United Way of North Penn, Green Tree Community Health Foundation, North Penn Community Health Foundation, Thomas Scattergood Foundation, Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation, and over 350 local agencies from the health, government, nonprofit and academic sectors, help to support the CHDB and survey. For more information visit www.phmc.org or contact Francine Axler at francine@phmc.org.