

For Release: Immediately

Contact: Tina Schultz, tschultz@prevent.org, 202.833.0009 ext. 115

NEW STUDY PROVIDES ROAD MAP ON HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR HEALTH CARE DOLLAR

*More than Half of Americans Who Need Valuable, Life-Saving
Preventive Services Continue to Go Without*

WASHINGTON, DC (June 19, 2006) — A new study by Partnership for Prevention identifies the most beneficial and cost-effective preventive health services, giving Americans a unique tool to make decisions about how their health care dollars are utilized. The report, “Priorities for America’s Health: Capitalizing on Life-Saving, Cost-Effective Preventive Services,” which is published in the July issue of *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, sheds light on the startling fact that more than 50 percent of Americans go without valuable preventive services – services that can improve quality of life and save lives.

“Currently, about 95 percent of health care dollars in the United States are spent on treating diseases, with relatively little attention paid to preventing diseases, which should be a national priority,” said David Satcher, M.D., Ph.D., former U.S. Surgeon General and chair of the National Commission on Prevention Priorities (NCPPI), a blue-ribbon panel that was convened by Partnership for Prevention to help guide the report. *“This landmark study highlights the importance of shifting focus to preventive care, which can provide an enormous positive impact on health and well-being, while also more effectively allocating our precious health care dollars. Basically, these are the preventive health services that offer the biggest bang for the buck.”*

The study, sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), part of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), ranked 25 recommended preventive services based on the health benefits of each service, both in terms of lives saved and lives improved, and on each service's value for the health care dollar.

According to “Priorities for America’s Health,” following are some of the most valuable preventive health services that can be offered in medical practice today yet have low utilization rates:

Doctors discussing taking a daily aspirin with men over 40, women over 50 and others at risk is one of the most valuable preventive services that can be offered in medical practice today. Daily aspirin use can prevent heart attacks and stroke. If all people in these age groups were advised to use aspirin daily, more than 80,000 lives could be saved annually. Aspirin is cheap and easy to get but taking it daily is not for everyone. Adults should talk to their doctors before getting started on a daily aspirin regimen.

Screening patients to determine if they smoke or use other tobacco products, providing brief smoking cessation counseling, and offering patients therapies and referrals to help them quit. This service is one of the three most important and cost-effective preventive services that can be offered in medical practice, yet 65 percent of adults have not received this service as it is recommended. In truth, this service is cost saving: if it was offered to all smokers, taking into account reasonable success rates, it could save \$3 billion in medical costs annually.

-more-

Key Finding continued

The **pneumococcal immunization** for older adults. Pneumococcal disease is a bacterial form of pneumonia that can lead to hospitalization and death. One dose of the pneumococcal immunization is effective for at least 10 years, yet 45 percent of all adults over the age of 65 have not received it. Disparities in delivery of this vaccine are particularly stark: 78 percent of Hispanic adults and 63 percent of black adults over age 65 reported never having received the pneumococcal immunization compared to 38 percent of white adults over age 65. This vaccine could save \$50 million annually in medical care costs if all people over age 65 were offered it.

Regular screening for colorectal cancer. Although colorectal cancer is the second deadliest cancer, it is highly curable when found early. Yet 65 percent of the target population is not up to date on screening. If all adults over the age of 50 were routinely screened for colorectal cancer, 19,000 deaths could be prevented annually.

Screening for Chlamydia among sexually active women. Chlamydia is the most common bacterial STD (sexually transmitted disease) in the U.S. with an estimated 3 million new cases annually. If all sexually active women under 25 were screened periodically, 60,000 cases of pelvic inflammatory disease, 8,000 cases of chronic pelvic pain and 7,500 cases of infertility would be prevented annually. While Chlamydia screening is recommended for all sexually active women under the age of 25, only 40 percent of women in this age group have received this screening service. This service is highly cost-effective at preventing the unnecessary heartache and expense of lifelong infertility.

Many Valuable Services Underutilized by Americans

“Not all preventive services you can get from your doctor are the same; some prevent more disease than others while some provide more value for the dollar. According to our study, many Americans are not receiving the most valuable preventive services,” said Ashley Coffield, MPA, senior analyst with Partnership for Prevention and co-author of the study. *“Priorities for America’s Health’ provides the resource to highlight which services we should focus on to have the biggest impact on our nation’s health.”*

Coffield continued, *“If these services were more consistently offered to the American people, fewer people would die and fewer people would suffer from diseases that are preventable. The U.S. could also get more for the dollars it invests in health care by focusing on the services that provide the most benefits at the least cost, while also making progress toward reducing disparities in health outcomes.”*

Partnership for Prevention worked in collaboration with HealthPartners Research Foundation, a Minneapolis-based clinical and health services research organization. The research team analyzed scientific evidence – including more than 8,000 published studies– and summarized the best available data on clinical preventive services to assist all types of decision makers in choosing where to focus their prevention efforts.

“The rankings will help clinicians, health plans, employers, policy makers and the public prioritize the clinical preventive services that provide the greatest health impact and the most value. This is a road map to better health and a higher return on our investments in health care,” said Julie Gerberding, M.D., Ph.D., Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

-more-

The study examined 21 preventive services recommended for asymptomatic people and for those at high-risk for coronary heart disease by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF), an independent panel of experts sponsored by the AHRQ. The study also included four recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP): three for adults and one for a defined series of childhood immunizations. The USPSTF and ACIP recommendations are considered the gold standard among recommendations for preventive care. However, decision-makers wishing to improve delivery of preventive services face competing demands for finite resources and need additional information about which services provide the most benefits to the populations they serve.

“This study not only helps patients and clinicians develop a preventive health plan, it further validates the important work of the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force,” said Carolyn Clancy, M.D., director of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.

Ranking Methodology

Partnership ranked services based on two criteria. The first was the disease, injury and premature death prevented if the service were delivered to all people who would benefit from it.

The second was cost effectiveness, measured as the net cost of the preventive service divided by the service’s health benefits. Net costs are the resources used in providing the service less the resources saved by avoiding disease or injury (e.g., avoided hospital costs). Cost effectiveness provided a standard measure for comparing services’ return on investment.

Scores for the two criteria were added, and the services were ranked in descending order. (The only services receiving the highest possible score on *both* criteria were discussing daily aspirin use with men over 40 and women over 50; childhood vaccines and smoking cessation counseling.) Finally, the authors identified which of the highest ranked preventive services had the lowest delivery rates nationally as well as which preventive services would provide the most gains in health were utilization rates improved above current levels.

###

To read the full text of the studies and related commentary go to Partnership for Prevention’s website at www.prevent.org/ncpp.

Partnership for Prevention is a national nonprofit organization that works on the leading edge of health promotion and disease prevention, developing and disseminating insights that reveal the most effective prevention interventions and investments. Partnership analyzes critical health issues and provides innovative and feasible options along with evidence-based guidance to health professionals, policy makers and employers on a wide variety of prevention related topics including tobacco; obesity, nutrition and physical activity; alcohol; immunizations; worksite health promotion; and other cross-cutting prevention issues.

Partnership has a unique blend of members that helps unite diverse interests in support of strong prevention policies. Partnership’s membership includes academic institutions, corporations, trade associations, nongovernmental organizations, patient groups, health and medical professional associations, managed care and other healthcare providers, and governmental agencies.

HealthPartners Research Foundation, located in Minneapolis, is a not-for-profit corporation within the HealthPartners family of health care organizations. Investigators conduct clinical, health services and basic science research that improves the health of HealthPartners members and the community.