Supplementary Material

The incidence of personal importation of prescription medicines among Australians 45 and older: a cross-sectional survey

Narcyz Ghinea\textsuperscript{A,B,*} (PhD, Macquarie University Research Fellow), Andrew Roberts\textsuperscript{A} (PhD, Postdoctoral Research Fellow), Tania Prvan\textsuperscript{C} (PhD, Senior Lecturer) and Wendy Rogers\textsuperscript{A,B,D} (PhD, Distinguished Professor)

\textsuperscript{A}Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, Macquarie University, North Ryde, NSW, Australia

\textsuperscript{B}Macquarie University Agency and Ethics Research Centre, Macquarie University, North Ryde, NSW, Australia

\textsuperscript{C}School of Mathematics and Physical Sciences, Faculty of Science and Engineering, Macquarie University, North Ryde, NSW, Australia

\textsuperscript{D}School of Medicine, Macquarie University, North Ryde, NSW, Australia

*Correspondence to: Email: Narcyz.ghinea@mq.edu.au
Background

Personal importation of prescription medicines: a national survey

(1) What is this study about?
Medicines are readily available for purchase online from overseas. However, we know very little about whether Australians buy medicines from overseas and why. We would like your help to fill this knowledge gap. The focus of this study are prescription medicines – those that require a doctor’s prescription and come from a pharmacy.

You are invited to take part in this survey because you live in Australia, use medicines prescribed by your doctor, and are 45 or older.

Even if you have not purchased your prescription medicines from overseas you can still provide valuable feedback.

(2) Who is running the study and has it received ethics approval?
This study is funded by a Macquarie University Research Fellowship and is being run by Dr Narcyz Ghinea, Philosophy Department, Faculty of Arts, Macquarie University (redacted) or email via narcyz.ghinea@mq.edu.au). This study has been approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. You may contact the Committee through the Director, Research Ethics & Integrity (redacted) if you have any concerns about the study.

(3) What will the study involve for me?
The survey involves answering questions with a fixed set of options to choose the answer from. In some places you may write answers. It should take you no longer than 10 minutes to complete. You are under no obligation to complete the survey once it has begun. You can discontinue at any time.

(4) What will happen to information about me that is collected during the study?
Survey responses are anonymous and you will not be identifiable in any research outputs. The data will be collected via this questionnaire platform (Qualtrics) and will be stored on a secure OneDrive folder on Macquarie University’s server for analysis. This folder will only be accessible to the research team. Aggregated survey results will be published in various formats to influence policy and debate around personal importation.

By proceeding to undertake the survey you are telling us that you:

- understand the above information.
- consent to the use of the data you provide as described above.
Intro

We would like to begin by asking some general questions

Age

What is your current age? (i.e. the age you turned at your last birthday)

Sex

What is your sex?

- Male
- Female
- Another term (please write)

Personal income

Which of the following groups best represents your personal annual income, before tax, from all sources?

- No income
- Up to $25,999 (up to $499 per week)
- $26,000 to $51,999 ($500 to $999 per week)
- $52,000 to $77,999 ($1000 to $1499 per week)
- $78,000 to $103,999 ($1500 to $1999 per week)
- $104,000 to $129,999 ($2000 to $2499 per week)
- $130,000 to $155,999 ($2500 to $2999 per week)
- $156,000 to $181,999 ($3000 to $3499 per week)
- $182,000 to $207,999 ($3500 to $3999 per week)
- $208,000 or more ($4000 or more per week)
Household Income

Which of the following groups best represents your household annual income, before tax, from all sources?

- No income
- Up to $25,999 (up to $499 per week)
- $26,000 to $51,999 ($500 to $999 per week)
- $52,000 to $77,999 ($1000 to $1499 per week)
- $78,000 to $103,999 ($1500 to $1999 per week)
- $104,000 to $129,999 ($2000 to $2499 per week)
- $130,000 to $155,999 ($2500 to $2999 per week)
- $156,000 to $181,999 ($3000 to $3499 per week)
- $182,000 to $207,999 ($3500 to $3999 per week)
- $208,000 to $233,999 ($4000 to $4499 per week)
- $234,000 to $259,999 ($4500 to $4999 per week)
- $260,000 to $285,999 ($5000 to $5499 per week)
- $286,000 or more ($5500 per week or more)
- Don't know

Health status

How would you rate your overall health?

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

# medicines

How many prescription medicines are you currently taking?

- Between 1 and 3
- Between 4 and 6
- More than 6
- None

Spending on medicine

During the past 12 months, how much did you spend on average per month on prescription medicines?

- $0-$100 per month
- $101-$250 per month
- $251-$500 per month
- $501-$750 per month
- $751-$1000 per month
- Greater than $1000 per month
Not subsidised

Do you pay more than $42.50 for any of your medications?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Import ever?

Have you ever bought a prescription medicine through an online supplier based in another country?

- Yes
- No

Import 12 months?

- Display this question

Did you buy a prescription medicine through an online supplier based in another country within the last 12 months?

- Yes
- No

Doctor referral?

Has your doctor ever spoken to you about buying prescription medicines online from another country?

- Yes
- No

Safe?

Do you believe it is safe to buy medicines online from another country?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure
Medical Conditions

Did you buy a prescription medicine through an online supplier based in another country within the last 12 months? Yes

What medical conditions did the prescription medicines you bought from overseas in the last 12 months treat, manage, or prevent? (select all that are applicable)

- Asthma
- Arthritis (e.g., rheumatism, osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis)
- Cancer
- Cardiovascular disease (e.g., heart disease, diseases of the arteries, stroke)
- Diabetes
- Kidney disease
- Osteoporosis
- Sight and hearing disorders (e.g., macular degeneration, glaucoma)
- Bodily pain
- Mental, behavioural, and cognitive conditions (e.g., depression, anxiety disorders, bipolar disorder)
- Infectious diseases (e.g., HIV, Hepatitis C, COVID-19)
- Other condition (please specify)

Rare disease

Did you buy a prescription medicine through an online supplier based in another country within the last 12 months? Yes

Are any of these medical conditions classified as a "rare disease"?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Yes - Asthma
The following questions are about the **asthma** medicines you have imported in the last 12 months.

---

**Asthma Buy1**

*Why did you buy prescription **asthma** medicines through an online supplier based in another country?* (select all that are relevant)

- [ ] I wanted to save some money
- [ ] I couldn't afford the medicine(s) in Australia
- [ ] It was easier or more convenient to buy it this way
- [ ] I don't see any reason I shouldn't buy medicines from overseas
- [ ] The medicine(s) aren't sold in Australia
- [ ] Other (specify below)

---

**Asthma Buy2**

**Display this question**

If: Why did you buy prescription asthma medicines through an online supplier based in another country... q://QID10/SelectedChoicesCount Is Greater Than 1

**Carry forward choices**

from Why did you buy prescription asthma medicines... that are Selected Choices - Entered Text

*Which of your reasons for buying prescription **asthma** medicines from overseas was most important?*

- [ ] I wanted to save some money
- [ ] I couldn't afford the medicine(s) in Australia
- [ ] It was easier or more convenient to buy it this way
- [ ] I don't see any reason I shouldn't buy medicines from overseas
- [ ] The medicine(s) aren't sold in Australia
- [ ] Other (specify below)
How did you find the online supplier(s) of your prescription asthma medicines? (select all that are relevant)

- Through my doctor
- Through an online forum or social media
- Through friends and family
- Through online advertisements
- Through searching online for the cheapest price for my medicine
- Other (specify below)

Which of these channels for finding the online supplier(s) of your prescription asthma medicines was most important?

- Through my doctor
- Through an online forum or social media
- Through friends and family
- Through online advertisements
- Through searching online for the cheapest price for my medicine
- Other (specify below)
Asthma Steps1

How did you ensure the online supplier(s) of your prescription asthma medicines were reliable? (select all that apply)

- I didn't take any specific steps
- I sought advice from an online community I trust regarding reliable suppliers
- I relied on the experience of people I know that have used the supplier before
- I checked that the supplier was independently verified (e.g. via pharmacychecker.com)
- I personally contacted the supplier and asked questions
- The website seemed legitimate and transparent
- Other (specify below)

Asthma Steps2

- Display this question

  1. How did you ensure the online supplier(s) of your prescription asthma medicines were reliable? (...
  q:0624/SelectedChoicesCount  Is Greater Than 1

- Carry forward choices

  from How did you ensure the online supplier(s) of your prescription asthma medicines were reliable? that are Selected Choices - Entered Text

Which method was most important for checking the reliability of the online supplier(s)?

- I didn't take any specific steps
- I sought advice from an online community I trust regarding reliable suppliers
- I relied on the experience of people I know that have used the supplier before
- I checked that the supplier was independently verified (e.g. via pharmacychecker.com)
- I personally contacted the supplier and asked questions
- The website seemed legitimate and transparent
- Other (specify below)

Asthma Regularity

How regularly do you purchase prescription asthma medicines from overseas?

- I've only done it once
- I've done it a few times
- I do it regularly
Asthma Location

In what countries were the online suppliers of your prescription asthma medicines located? (If you have used multiple suppliers type all relevant countries)

- I'm not sure
- I'd prefer not to say
- The countries are:

Asthma Supplier

Which overseas suppliers did you use to buy prescription asthma medicines?

- I can't remember
- I'd prefer not to say
- The names/web addresses of the suppliers are:

Asthma Medicines

Which prescription asthma medicines did you buy from overseas?

- I'd prefer not to say
- The medicines were:

Asthma Prescription

Did an online supplier ever provide you with a prescription asthma medicine without a doctor's prescription?

- Yes
- No
- I can't remember
I don't personally import medicines

Q249

As you have never bought a prescription medicine from an online supplier based overseas, please answer the following questions.

Why not buy?

Why don't you buy prescription medicines online from another country? (select all that apply)

☐ I can afford to buy the medicines I need in Australia
☐ It is too risky to purchase medicines from overseas
☐ I didn't know I could purchase medicines from overseas
☐ I'm not interested in buying medicines from overseas
☐ Other (please specify)
Reasons not buy

Display this question

Why don't you buy prescription medicines online from another country? (select all that apply)  q:Q125/SelectedChoicesCount Is Greater Than  1

Carry forward choices

from Why don't you buy prescription medicines online... that are Selected Choices - Entered Text

Which one of your reasons for not buying prescription medicines from overseas is most important?

- I can afford to buy the medicines I need in Australia
- It is too risky to purchase medicines from overseas
- I didn't know I could purchase medicines from overseas
- I'm not interested in buying medicines from overseas
- Other (please specify)

Reputable supplier?

Would you buy your medicines online from another country if it was from a reliable supplier?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Couldn't determine?

Have you bought a medicine from an online supplier without knowing or checking what country they were based in?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

I imported medicines > 12 months ago
The following questions are about the prescription medicines you imported more than 12 months ago.

> 12 Why buy?

Why did you buy prescription medicines through an online supplier based in another country? (select all that are relevant)

- I wanted to save some money
- I couldn't afford the medicine(s) in Australia
- It was easier or more convenient to buy it this way
- I don't see any reason I shouldn't buy medicines from overseas
- The medicine(s) aren't sold in Australia
- Other (specify below)

> 12 main reason buy

Display this question

If you did buy prescription medicines through an online supplier based in another country? (select...)

Carry forward choices

from Why did you buy prescription medicines through ... that are Selected Choices - Entered Text

Which of your reasons for buying prescription medicines from overseas was most important?

- I wanted to save some money
- I couldn't afford the medicine(s) in Australia
- It was easier or more convenient to buy it this way
- I don't see any reason I shouldn't buy medicines from overseas
- The medicine(s) aren't sold in Australia
- Other (specify below)
How did you find the online supplier(s) of your prescription medicines? (select all that are relevant)

- Through my doctor
- Through an online forum or social media
- Through friends and family
- Through online advertisements
- Through searching online for the cheapest price for my medicine
- Other (specify below)

Which of these channels for finding the online supplier(s) of your prescription medicines was most important?

- Through my doctor
- Through an online forum or social media
- Through friends and family
- Through online advertisements
- Through searching online for the cheapest price for my medicine
- Other (specify below)
How did you ensure the online supplier(s) of your prescription medicines were reliable? (select all that apply)

- I didn't take any specific steps
- I sought advice from an online community I trust regarding reliable suppliers
- I relied on the experience of people I know that have used the supplier before
- I checked that the supplier was independently verified (e.g. via pharmacychecker.com)
- I personally contacted the supplier and asked questions
- The website seemed legitimate and transparent
- Other (specify below)

Which method was most important for checking the reliability of the online supplier(s)?

- I didn't take any specific steps
- I sought advice from an online community I trust regarding reliable suppliers
- I relied on the experience of people I know that have used the supplier before
- I checked that the supplier was independently verified (e.g. via pharmacychecker.com)
- I personally contacted the supplier and asked questions
- The website seemed legitimate and transparent
- Other (specify below)

In what countries were the online supplier(s) of your prescription medicines located? (if you have used multiple suppliers enter all relevant countries)

- I'm not sure
- I'd prefer not to say
- The countries are:
Which overseas suppliers did you use to buy the prescription medicines?

- I can't remember
- I'd prefer not to say
- The names/web addresses of the suppliers are:

Which prescription medicines did you buy from overseas?

- I'd prefer not to say
- The medicines were:

Did an online supplier ever provide you with a prescription medicine without a doctor's prescription?

- Yes
- No
- I can't remember
For what medical conditions did you buy prescription medicines from overseas? (select all that are applicable)

- Asthma
- Arthritis (e.g. rheumatism, osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis)
- Cancer
- Cardiovascular disease (e.g. heart disease, diseases of the arteries, stroke)
- Diabetes
- Kidney disease
- Osteoporosis
- Sight and hearing disorders (e.g. macular degeneration; glaucoma)
- Bodily pain
- Mental, behavioural and cognitive conditions (e.g. depression; anxiety disorders; bipolar disorder)
- Infectious diseases (e.g. HIV, Hepatitis C, COVID-19)
- Other condition (please specify)

Below are a few more questions to help us better understand your situation.
Help paying?

During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following to pay for your prescription medicines: (select all that apply or leave blank if none apply)

- [ ] Ask friends or relatives for money
- [ ] Crowdfund money
- [ ] Get a loan or drawdown a mortgage
- [ ] Not pay bills on time
- [ ] Skip meals
- [ ] Sell assets/belongings
- [ ] Other measures (please specify)

Delayed taking?

During the past 12 months, did you delay purchasing a medicine prescribed by your doctor because of cost?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

Didn't take?

During the past 12 months, did you at any time not take a medicine prescribed by your doctor because of cost?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

Saving money

Please select which option best describes your attitude towards buying prescriptions medicines online to save money:

- [ ] I’d never buy medicines online to save money
- [ ] I’d consider it to save any amount of money
- [ ] I’d consider it if I could save at least $100 per month ($1200 per year)
- [ ] I’d consider it if I could save at least $250 per month ($3000 per year)
- [ ] I’d consider it if I could save at least $500 per month ($6000 per year)
- [ ] I’d consider it if I could save more than $1000 per month ($12,000 per year)
Affordable?

How would you describe the cost of prescription medicines in Australia?

- Very affordable
- Affordable
- Unaffordable
- Very unaffordable

Awareness of PI

Are you aware of Australia’s Personal Importation Scheme, which allows people to import medicines from another country under some conditions?

- Yes
- No

Final comments

If you have any additional thoughts or comments please share below:

We thank you for your time spent taking this survey.

Your response has been recorded.