

## Supplementary Material

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

*Narczyz Ghinea*<sup>A,B,\*</sup> (PhD, Macquarie University Research Fellow), *Andrew Roberts*<sup>A</sup> (PhD, Postdoctoral Research Fellow), *Tania Prvan*<sup>C</sup> (PhD, Senior Lecturer) and *Wendy Rogers*<sup>A,B,D</sup> (PhD, Distinguished Professor)

<sup>A</sup>Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, Macquarie University, North Ryde, NSW, Australia

<sup>B</sup>Macquarie University Agency and Ethics Research Centre, Macquarie University, North Ryde, NSW, Australia

<sup>C</sup>School of Mathematics and Physical Sciences, Faculty of Science and Engineering, Macquarie University, North Ryde, NSW, Australia

<sup>D</sup>School of Medicine, Macquarie University, North Ryde, NSW, Australia

\*Correspondence to: Email: [Narczyz.ghinea@mq.edu.au](mailto:Narczyz.ghinea@mq.edu.au)

## **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 [narczyz.ghinea@mq.edu.au](mailto:narczyz.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](#)

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

**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



▼ [Display this question](#)

If [Did you buy a prescription medicine through an online supplier based in another country within th...](#) Yes Is Selected

**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



▼ [Display this question](#)

If [Did you buy a prescription medicine through an online supplier based in another country within th...](#) Yes Is Selected

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

- Yes
- No
- Unsure



 [Import from library](#)

[Add new question](#)



Yes - Asthma

AsthmaIntro

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



Page Break

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://QID16/SelectedChoicesCount Is Greater Than 1

▼ [Carry forward choices](#)

from Why did you buy prescription asthma medicines t... 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)

Page Break

Asthma Find1



**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)

Asthma Find2

▼ [Display this question](#)

If How did you find the online supplier(s) of your prescription asthma medicines? (select all that a...  
q://QID19/SelectedChoicesCount Is Greater Than 1

▼ [Carry forward choices](#)

from How did you find the online supplier(s) of your... that are Selected Choices - Entered Text

**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)

----- Page Break -----



**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)

Page Break

▼ [Display this question](#)

If How did you ensure the online supplier(s) of your prescription asthma medicines were reliable? (...  
q://QID24/SelectedChoicesCount Is Greater Than 1

▼ [Carry forward choices](#)

from How did you ensure the online supplier(s) of yo... 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)

Page Break

**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

Page Break

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



 Import from library

Add new question

▶ Yes - Arthritis | 12 Questions

▶ Yes - Cancer | 12 Questions

▶ Yes - Cardiovascular disease | 12 Questions

▶ Yes - Diabetes | 12 Questions

▶ Yes - Kidney disease | 12 Questions

▶ Yes - Osteoporosis | 12 Questions

▶ Yes - sight and hearing | 12 Questions

▶ Yes - bodily pain | 12 Questions

▶ Yes - mental, behavioural or cognitive conditions | 12 Questions

▶ Yes - infectious diseases | 12 Questions

▼ 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.**



..... Page Break .....

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](#)

If Why don't you buy prescription medicines online from another country? (select all that apply) q://QID25/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



 [Import from library](#)

[Add new question](#)

▼ I imported medicines > 12 months ago

Q280

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



Page Break

>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 **Why did you buy prescription medicines through an online supplier based in another country?** (select...  
q://QID281/SelectedChoicesCount Is Greater Than 1

▼ [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)

Page Break

>12 How find?



**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)

>12 main way find

▼ [Display this question](#)

If How did you find the online supplier(s) of your prescription medicines? (select all that are rele...  
q://QID283/SelectedChoicesCount Is Greater Than 1

▼ [Carry forward choices](#)

from How did you find the online supplier(s) of your... that are Selected Choices - Entered Text

**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)

----- Page Break -----

>12 steps taken?



**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)

>12 main step

▼ [Display this question](#)

If How did you ensure the online supplier(s) of your prescription medicines were reliable? (select a...  
q://QID285/SelectedChoicesCount Is Greater Than 1

▼ [Carry forward choices](#)

from How did you ensure the online supplier(s) of yo... 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)

----- Page Break -----

>12 from where?



**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:



>12 from whom?



**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:

>12 which medicine?



**Which prescription medicines did you buy from overseas?**

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

>12 months prescript



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

- Yes
- No
- I can't remember

>12 months diseases



**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)



 Import from library

Add new question

▼ Final questions



Last\_Text

**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:**



 Import from library

Add new question

Add Block

End of Survey

We thank you for your time spent taking this survey.

Your response has been recorded.