

24 Jul 2020 | News

International Self-Care Day 2020: How COVID-19 Has Changed Consumer Behavior

by Tom Gallen

The global consumer healthcare industry comes together on International Self-Care Day to highlight how the COVID-19 pandemic has sparked a change in behavior, with more and more people taking an interest in their own health.

To mark International Self-Care Day 2020, HBW Insight highlights a selection of campaigns launched by associations and industry players to promote consumer healthcare.

Research carried out by industry reveals that the global coronavirus outbreak has initiated a change in behavior, with more and more consumers interested in practicing self-care to maintain their own health.

While many of the initiatives focus on individual markets, industry is united in promoting the value of self-care in supporting health systems.

GSCF Promotes Importance Of Trust

The Global Self-Care Federation is using International Self-Care Day to highlight the importance of trust to the future of the industry.

“Trust is the bedrock of the self-care industry and a key determinant in successful self-care delivery,” says GSCF director general Judy Stenmark. “Consumers must trust that the information they receive is reliable, and that the products they use to care for their health are appropriate to treat their ailments.”

GSCF has published a report – [“Understanding trust in self-care”](#) – which shows that consumer trust in the industry is high, at 74%, with OTC medicines ranking as one of the most trusted sectors for both consumers and professional stakeholders.

Product efficacy, safety and regulation are the main drivers of trust and are crucial to responsible self-care, according to the report. When asked to name their most trusted sources of information relating to self-care, peer-reviewed scientific journals came out on top for professional stakeholders, while consumers ranked healthcare practitioners highest.

As a result of this study, GSCF has developed an action plan for improving trust in the self-care industry. This includes promoting a hub for consumer education resources from GSCF members and other recognized bodies; implementing a GSCF code of ethics for members to uphold and recognize as best practice; and publishing and communicating robust scientific evidence, including on the public health and economic value of self-care.

AESGP Highlights COVID Lessons

The value of self-care to society is the focus of the Association of the European Self-Care Industry, AESGP, on International Self-Care Day.

AESGP director general Jurate Svarcaite notes how the global COVID-19 outbreak has highlighted the growing importance of self-care.

“The COVID-19 pandemic was a good example of the role of self-care in both empowering individuals and supporting the resilience of health systems. We have all been asked to stay at home and practice self-care in order to flatten the curve of contagion and keep our health services running during the time of crisis,” Svarcaite says. “Because we engaged in self-care and limited unnecessary visits to hospitals and primary care centers, healthcare professionals were spared serious situations and to care for the seriously ill.”

AESGP has been running an awareness campaign throughout July across different social media channels, comprising animations and other materials, to highlight the benefits of self-care products, focusing on their use throughout different stages of consumers’ lives, and their value to individuals.

A highlight of the campaign is an animated video titled “Self-Care Generations” which follows families as they practice self-care at home for minor ailments such as headaches and indigestion.

[Click here to explore this interactive content online](#) 

PAGB Points To Changing Attitudes

PAGB, the UK consumer healthcare association, is also using International Self-Care Day to highlight the impact of COVID-19 on people’s attitudes to self-care.

British consumers' attitudes to self-care are changing as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, a new PAGB survey has found.

More than two-thirds (69%) of respondents to the survey of roughly 2,000 UK adults who might not have considered self-care as their first option before the pandemic said they were more likely to likely to do so in future, the PAGB reported.

Just under a third who would not have chosen a pharmacy as their first port of call for advice about a self-treatable condition said they were more likely to do so following the coronavirus pandemic, according to the association.

“Our survey results suggest there may never be a better time for policymakers to prioritize and encourage self-care,” comments PAGB CEO Michelle Riddalls. “That means recognizing and enhancing the role of pharmacy teams, who have too often been overlooked in the drive to improve both our health and our health services.” (Also see "[Coronavirus Pandemic Shifting UK Consumer Attitudes To Self-Care](#)" - HBW Insight, 22 Jul, 2020.)

GSK Assesses Regional Habits

GSK Consumer Healthcare has teamed up with market research specialist IPSOS to assess the impact COVID-19 on European citizens' behavior and attitude towards self-care.

A key finding from the [research](#) – which surveyed 4,400 participants aged between 16 and 75 years in Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK – is that the coronavirus pandemic has driven Europeans to adopt new everyday health habits. Across the four countries, 65% of people say they are now more likely to consider their health in day-to-day decision-making.

With the survey finding that the vast majority of people consider it important to take their health into their own hands to relieve pressure on healthcare systems, respondents from all countries said that buying trusted brands was important. On average across all four countries, 82% of respondents said that products they use must be scientifically proven.

“As the defining global health event of recent history, the Covid-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the lives of people living in Europe and beyond,” says Filippo Lanzi, GSK Consumer Healthcare's regional head of EMEA. “Our research shows the extent to which the pandemic has impacted attitudes towards personal well-being and self-care, and it's encouraging to see the increased importance that many people are now placing on looking after their own and others' health.”

Afipa And Sanofi Back Change

To mark International Self-Care Day in France, local self-medication industry association, Afipa, has [teamed up with Sanofi](#) to highlight how the industry has responded to the COVID-19

pandemic.

Afipa delegate general Luc Besançon says the crisis has made consumer healthcare industry players, as well as pharmacists, who have mobilized rapidly and responsibly, more visible to French consumers. This is a very positive sign for the future development of self-care in France, according to Besançon.

The contribution of Self-Care products to the management of the Covid-19 crisis is undeniable, says Besançon, whether that be in the treatment of the first symptoms of the disease, such as pain and fever, or in treating everyday minor ailments without medical consultation. “It is therefore essential that in the future Self-Care is truly integrated into the national prevention and health strategy. Our health system will be better for it and we will also respond to patients' expectations for more autonomy.”

Echoing these thoughts, Vincent Cotard, director of Consumer Healthcare at Sanofi France, says the crisis has highlighted how self-care is under-developed in the country. Consumers more than ever need support with preventative health measures and are increasingly interested in self-care, Cotard says.

Anefp Gives Its Top Tips

Spanish consumer healthcare industry association, anefp, is using International Self-Care Day to highlight the importance of individual responsibility during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The association's campaign – “Be responsible. Take care of yourself” – reminds consumers not to let their guard down with coronavirus continuing to spread throughout Spain. It sets out “[10 tips for responsible self-care](#)” including treating minor ailments with OTC products and remaining active to maintain a healthy body

Responsible self-care will make the difference between the return of lockdown and being able to enjoy life again without infection or outbreaks, according to anefp's general director Jaume Pey. “That is why these tips are so important, we have to remember how we should do things and not take anything for granted because the virus is still active.”

CHP Canada Notes Self-Care Motivation

Consumer healthcare industry association CHP Canada is highlighting the important role of self-care in the context of the country's COVID-19 outbreak.

A survey commissioned by CHP Canada – “[Self-care Information and Behaviour Among Canadians During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)” – found that of those respondents who had missed an in-person appointment with a doctor during the health crisis, more than two-thirds had practiced a range of self-care activities. 12% of respondents took care of the problem themselves, another 53%

used virtual care services, and 7% sought a pharmacist's advice.

More than half of those who managed their health conditions themselves during the pandemic were satisfied with the results, CHP Canada notes, and more than half of those who used virtual care would do so again even after the pandemic is over. As a result, more than 50% of Canadians are now more interested in finding ways to practice self-care at home, the association says.

“Overall, the COVID-19 pandemic increased the interest of Canadians in their health and motivated them to practice a range of self-care activities, including virtual care and consultation with pharmacists, to replace in-person visits to the doctor and treat health issues,” the association observes.

CHP Australia Spies COVID Opportunity

Industry association CHP Australia is using International Self-Care Day to highlight research which points to the opportunity presented by COVID-19 for the country to change its approach to healthcare.

A report by the Mitchell Institute, "[*Self-care and health: by all, for all. Learning from COVID-19*](#)", highlights the effectiveness of self-care in improving health and well-being for individuals and communities, and how it can help limit the devastating impact of infectious diseases.

Mitchell Institute's professor of Health Policy, Rosemary Calder, says COVID-19 has shown that engaging people in understanding how to prevent infection and illness, and how to be as healthy as possible, can reduce preventable health problems.

“We have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to apply this lesson to develop our health system to help people to be healthier,” says Calder, “rather than waiting for them to be unwell with health problems that are preventable – which is what happens now.”

CHP Australia says it fully supports and endorses the Mitchell Institute's report, and its recommendation that governments focus on enabling the health system to embed self-care support in all health care services and to prioritize prevention and management of both infectious and chronic diseases, particularly in primary healthcare.