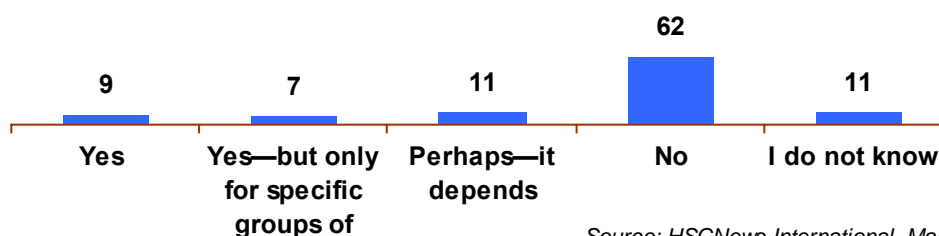


Do you believe that consumers have access to enough publicly-available information to take responsibility for the management of their healthcare?

[% of respondents; total = 55]



Source: HSCNews International, March 2005

consuming a product or programme. Health consumerism sounds pretty, but it really means folks looking for healthcare coverage at the best-possible price, and with the best-possible coverage overall“.



Access to information

Do you believe that consumers have enough publicly-available information to take responsibility for the management of their healthcare?

Echoing the responses to previous questions, just under two thirds of the participants thought that not enough publicly-available information existed for consumers to take responsibility for the management of their own healthcare. Participants specified various informational shortfalls:

- **Lack of independent information about HSAs.** Much of today’s data on HSAs is supplied only by accountants and insurers, stressed one participant.
- **Low quality of information on HSAs** (particularly on the Internet).
- **Lack of simplicity in publicly-available information.** “For too many of us, the information about our medical needs, treatments, or medication is not written in a simplified manner that allows us to understand fully the costs and implications”, said the [National](#)

[Federation of the Blind](#), adding: “An unfortunate consequence is that the public and patients have begun to distrust even traditional sources of information, such as healthcare providers”.

- **Lack of transparency on pricing and quality of services.** One participant stated: “Most healthcare providers cannot provide a quote on the cost of care in advance to a consumer. So how can consumers compare prices?”

- **Accessibility of information.** One participant insisted: “Much is on the Internet. But if a consumer has no access to the Internet, then getting information is difficult. Also, consumers who are less literate are at a great disadvantage”. Noted another participant: “Even with the Internet, the process of information gathering is time consuming for most consumers”.

However, one participant from a neurological patient organisation cautioned: “I believe that access to information is not the problem in most cases. The problem is access to the care itself. Healthcare insurance is very expensive in the US, and the lack of it has led to many deaths and bankruptcies”.

