WHAT IS CHRONIC CONSTIPATION?
Chronic constipation, or CC, is a digestive disorder marked by uncomfortable or infrequent bowel movements persisting over a period of at least three months. Symptoms include lumpy or hard stools, straining during bowel movements and a feeling of incomplete evacuation. CC may begin gradually and can persist for months or even years. One type of CC is chronic idiopathic constipation, or CIC, for which the cause is unknown.1,2

HOW COMMON IS CC?
CC is the most common digestive complaint in the United States and the world. About 15%, or 45 million people, suffer from CC in the U.S. alone, while as many as 35 million Americans suffer from the idiopathic type of constipation.2,3

WHO IS AFFECTED BY CC?
CC affects children as well as adults of every age, including an estimated 5% of men and 15% of women. The disorder increases with age, disproportionately impacting the elderly. CC is estimated to affect half of elderly people living in the community and 74% -- or nearly 3 out of 4 -- of nursing home residents.4,5

WHAT IS IT LIKE TO LIVE WITH CC?
The physical discomfort associated with CC affects patients’ ability to work and attend school, causes psychological distress and

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diminishes quality of life. In fact, research indicates that the impact of CC on patients’ quality of life is similar to that of other serious chronic diseases -- such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), diabetes and depression.5,6

**HOW SERIOUS IS CC?**

Although chronic constipation is often dismissed as a nuisance, it oftentimes is a serious medical disorder that can lead to multiple sequelae, or secondary medical conditions. CC is a major risk factor for diverticular disease, which can develop if the walls of the large intestine are damaged by straining during bowel movements. Patients who develop diverticular disease may require surgery. CC can also lead to hemorrhoids; rectal prolapse, in which part of the rectum protrudes through the anus; anal fissure, a split in the skin of the anus; and fecal impaction. Fecal impaction is particularly common among the inactive and bedridden elderly.1

**WHAT CAUSES CC?**

Common causes of chronic constipation include low-fiber diets and dehydration, lack of physical activity and problems with intestinal function. CC can be associated with chronic illnesses that affect the elderly. While some causes of CC are well recognized, there are no identifiable causes of CIC.1,5,7,8

**IS THERE A CURE FOR CC?**

There is no cure for CC.1

**HOW IS CC TREATED?**

Current treatments include both over-the-counter (OTC) and prescription products -- including bulking agents, enemas and a wide variety of OTC and prescription laxatives. While treatments provide patients with temporary relief, they have no effect on the underlying causes of chronic constipation and fail to normalize many patients. Another shortcoming of current treatments are unpleasant side effects, the most common of which

**FACT:**

**CC is a significant driver of healthcare costs.**

Healthcare systems spend millions of dollars annually to diagnose and treat this disorder -- including $820 million on over-the-counter (OTC) laxatives in the U.S.
are abdominal cramping and diarrhea. Patients often see-saw between the discomfort of CC and bouts of diarrhea, leaving them and their doctors dissatisfied with available treatments.1,5,6,7,9

WHY IS CC EXPECTED TO INCREASE?
The problem of CC can be expected to grow as the elderly population increases. The U.S. elderly population is expected to reach 80 million by 2050, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. That means as many as 1 in 5 Americans will be elderly. A swelling elderly population will affect other countries as well. The United Nations predicts that people aged 60 and above will represent 22% of the world population by 2050, up from 11% today.10,11

WHAT IS THE COST OF CC TO HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS?
CC is a significant driver of healthcare costs. In fact, healthcare systems spend millions of dollars annually to diagnose and treat this disorder -- including $820 million on OTC laxatives in the U.S. alone. The cost to diagnose and treat CC can be expected to rise as “baby boomers” age and increase the elderly population.5,9,10,11,12,13

REFERENCES: