

Improving Medication Adherence for Chronic Conditions

Nonadherence to medications is associated with higher hospital admission rates, suboptimal health outcomes, increased morbidity and mortality, and increased health care costs. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), direct health care costs associated with nonadherence total \$100 billion to \$300 billion annually in the United States.¹ A 2019 study demonstrated the rising trend of nonadherence and associated hospitalizations due to cardiovascular and cerebrovascular events (CCE). Approximately 11.6% of patients identified as being nonadherent to their medication were hospitalized for CCE, leading to increased mortality, health care utilization, and costs.² In another study conducted in patients with chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, and hypercholesterolemia, patients who had higher adherence rates (80 to 100%) had lower all-cause hospitalization rates and lower medical costs than less adherent patients.³

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) incorporates an adherence assessment in its a five-star quality rating system for Medicare prescription drug plans. The star rating addresses adherence for noninsulin diabetes medications, renin angiotensin system antagonists (e.g., benazepril, valsartan), and statins in Medicare Part D beneficiaries 18 years and older as a measure of patient safety. Patients are deemed adherent when the proportion of days in the measurement period covered by prescription claims for medications in the therapeutic category of interest is at least 80 percent.⁴

Consider the following recommendations to help your patients ADOPT optimal adherence. ⁵		
A	Assess for signs of non-adherence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Missed appointments/refills Lack of response to treatment
D	Describe key medication information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name of medication Number of tablets and frequency of dosing Importance of medication and role in reducing complications Common side effects Duration
O	Optimize medication regimens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write for 90-day supplies for chronic medications Consider combination formulations when available Avoid regimens dosed more often than twice daily when possible Synchronize simultaneous dosing of different medications Provide dose consolidation if possible Encourage enrollment in automatic refill systems at pharmacies
P	Provide behavioral support and tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pill boxes Bubble pack (sealed set of medications customized by patient's pharmacy) Identify daily reminders to prompt patient to take medication (e.g., take before brushing teeth)
T	Take time to follow-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reassess adherence at each appointment Check for side effects that may cause discontinuation Problem solve adherence difficulties using patient-specific solutions

References

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