

## Walgreens Unveils Solutions to Boost Medication Adherence

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By Paul DeMiglio | Apr 2, 2013

How can health professionals enable their patients to take medications more consistently as prescribed?

Personalized counseling from pharmacists and prescription refill reminders are two effective ways now shown to fuel better drug adherence, according to research from Walgreens presented March 15 at the World Congress Summit in Philadelphia.

Walgreens' community pharmacy programs – in addition to successful intervention models – are equipping patients with powerful tools to self-manage their health.

One finding, for example, revealed that individuals receiving in-person counseling from their pharmacist saw 7.2 percent higher adherence than those with more conventional pharmacy care. Meanwhile, one of Walgreens' pilot programs demonstrated that patients who receive prescription refill reminders (also called automated refill reminders or ARR) are more likely to consistently take medications for chronic conditions.

"In order to improve medication adherence among patients, providers need to understand the key challenges and contributors to non-adherence, and how to address them," said Jim Cohn, Walgreen Co. spokesperson. "The research findings demonstrate how programs at the community pharmacy level designed to target common barriers to adherence, such as the challenge of learning a new medication therapy or simple forgetfulness, can significantly improve patient health and outcomes. Ultimately, these types of pharmacy initiatives can help providers do their part to ensure more people get, stay and live well."

Walgreens isn't alone in recommending evidence-based approaches to enhance adherence outcomes. The Medication Adherence Project's (MAP) 2010 Training Package also offers strategies for both providers and pharmacists that stress individualized patient engagement, with solutions that include writing 90-day

instead of 30-day prescriptions, prescribing generics, communicating directly with providers, and more.

Securing increased medication adherence will not only go far in helping patients live longer and healthier, but will deliver considerable savings for the health care system too.

How do we know? Underscoring the benefits of adherence, MAP cites “lower disease-related medical costs” for diabetes and hypercholesterolemia in addition to related “reductions in health care costs.”

The New England Health Institute (NEHI) also provides compelling evidence in its October 2012 Issue Brief that reducing medication non-adherence, which contributes to hospital readmissions, helps lower hospitalizations and saves on associated expenses, noting: “One study found that one-third of adverse drug events resulting in a hospital admission were related to non-adherence. The aggregate cost of hospital admissions related to medication adherence has been estimated to be roughly \$100 billion per year and estimates of the share of hospital admissions related to non-adherence are as high as 10 percent.”

Successful strategies generating increased medication adherence are clearly worth pursuing and replicating, both to strengthen the quality of health services and to lower the cost of care.

Now we want to hear from you. As a medical professional, what approaches do you incorporate to encourage patients to properly take their meds? If you’re a patient, what has worked for you?

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