

With a Little Help from My Friends, Family... And Apps

By Linda Barlow | May 16, 2013

"Drugs don't work in patients who don't take them." – C. Everett Koop, former Surgeon General

It was an idea born of near tragedy: an elderly, diabetic father who double-dosed on his insulin therapy and suffered a medical emergency. His two sons realized that if they were more involved in reviewing their father's daily medication and insulin regimens, it could change his behavior for the better and help him get healthier.



Photos courtesy of NextGen Healthcare

So Omri and RotemShor co-founded the [MediSafe Project](#), a free mobile app that makes it easier for families and friends to give the support needed to help their loved ones get healthier and integrate healthier behavior modification into their everyday lives. In the first four months after its launch, users reported medication adherence rates of 79 percent (82.25 percent for statins) – well above the [50 percent average medication adherence rate](#) reported by the [World Health Organization](#).

The MediSafe Project provides an easy-to-use interface – an interactive pillbox of sorts — over iOS and Android mobile phones. Users input information about their

meds by typing their names or photographing their National Drug Code numbers. The system stores the correct pharmaceutical name, manufacturer and dosage, ensuring an error-free medication list in the event of a medical emergency. Users signify taking their meds by dragging pills from the virtual pillbox into a mouth icon, which “swallows” the pills.

Users receive alerts before medication courses are completed, allowing them to order refills in a timely manner. In addition to reminding users when it’s time to take their medication, the MediSafe Project sends alerts to selected family members, friends and caretakers when a loved one misses a dose. Users can also email a personalized list of adherence stats to their doctor, giving doctors better patient oversight between office visits. A prescription page feature lets doctors “prescribe” the MediSafe project to their patients to help better monitor medication adherence.

The impact of non-adherence on the outcomes of patients with cardiovascular diseases is one example that underscores why it is so critical to implement strategies and utilize technologies that improve medication adherence.

“Medication non-adherence is a problem that costs U.S. hospitals billions of dollars every year,” says Omri “Bob” Shor, CEO, MediSafe. “An American dies every nineteen minutes from skipping or taking medication incorrectly. Our goal is to help combat this problem and encourage healthy habits among users and their support systems with easy-to-use technology.”

The MediSafe Project isn’t the only app on the medication adherence scene. The free NextGen® MedicineCabinet app lets users create and update a list of medications, including dosing and schedule information, thus creating their own “personal” medication record.

Notifications are sent for each medication and users can confirm adherence. The app was designed, in part, to improve adherence and proper use of medication by enhancing patients’ understanding of how to correctly take their medication and to recognize adverse reactions. According to the company, it also equips health care professionals with all the relevant information they need, in a way they like to view it.

“Mobile patient engagement is at the forefront of today’s changing health care environment,” said Ike Ellison, executive vice president of business development for NextGen Healthcare, in a statement. “Providing consumer technology that

encourages members to control and lead healthier lifestyles is a key factor in improving outcomes.”

Michael Paquin, vice president, business development for NextGen Healthcare, added “One of our users commented on the way that she was able to, for the first time, be able to share her medication lists easily with family, friends and all her physicians. It has saved this particular patient hours of time on a monthly basis.”

Technology-based solutions like the MediSafe Project and the NextGen Medicine Cabinet are among the latest patient-directed tools that improve medication adherence.

However, providers still play an important role in assisting patients in maintaining healthy behaviors like medication adherence. The American College of Preventive Medicine offers a SIMPLE approach on how providers can help their patients take their medications as prescribed.

Barriers to medication compliance abound, with memory issues, lack of support, and lack of education just being a few. What is behind these barriers? How can patient behaviors and motivations be changed?



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