MEDICATION ADHERENCE

WORKING TOGETHER TO HELP ACHIEVE BETTER TREATMENT OUTCOMES

Physicians often are not fully aware of patients’ nonadherence.¹⁻³

In a survey of 1,100 patients, 83% of patients would never tell their doctor if they didn’t plan to fill their prescription.⁴


An educational resource provided by Merck.
The best treatment can be rendered ineffective by poor adherence.¹

— WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

1. Understanding Adherence
2. Research Findings
3. Merck’s Adherence Estimator® and Other Resources
Understanding Adherence
MEDICATION ADHERENCE is the extent to which patients take medications as prescribed by their health care provider.¹

- Adherence implies collaboration between the physician and patient with active participation by the patient.¹⁻³
- Adherence is more aligned with patient-centered care.²⁻³

The **cost** of drug-related morbidity, including poor adherence, has been estimated to be up to **$290 billion** annually.¹

• Medication nonadherence has been associated with greater health care use and increased costs.²

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Poor adherence means patients with chronic illnesses often **fail to reach their treatment goals** despite the availability of effective therapies.¹

- On average, **15% of patients will not** fill their first prescription.²

- In an analysis of pharmacy claims for over 350,000 patients from 2012, most patients **stopped filling** their prescriptions **within the first 6 months**.³

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³. Data available on request from Merck, Professional Services-DAP, WP1-27, PO Box 4, West Point, PA 19486-0004 code. Please specify information package NOND-1084242-0001.
Adherence decreases over the first year of therapy.

Prescription claims data are from the Truven Health MarketScan Commercial Database. Analysis includes more than 350,000 patients who used medications in the 6 therapeutic areas shown. There was a 12-month look-back period and a 30-day grace period for patients to refill their prescriptions. Patients were tracked for 12 months in 2012 following the filling of a new prescription. The number of patients who started any prescription medication in the therapeutic category between October 1, 2012, and December 31, 2012, are shown in Month 0 (representing a baseline of 100%) and the numbers and percentages of patients who refilled those prescriptions are shown by month in the figure above.

1. Data available on request from Merck, Professional Services-DAP, WP1-27, PO Box 4, West Point, PA 19486-0004 code. Please specify information package NOND-1084242-0001.
Medication nonadherence decreases the likelihood that patients will achieve their desired treatment goals.

Medication Nonadherence Is Associated With¹:

- A higher risk of worse health outcomes
- Increased hospitalizations and emergency department visits
- Failure to reach treatment goals

Research Findings
If we are to improve medication adherence, we must first be able to recognize those who are failing to adhere. \(^1\) — VACS 3 Project Team

Merck is committed to research leadership in medication adherence.

- To better understand how to improve medication adherence, Merck has conducted extensive research, including:
  - Working with nationally recognized adherence experts
  - Comprehensive evaluations of adherence publications
  - Focus groups with health care consumers regarding their medication adherence
  - Quantitative survey research to identify predictors of patients’ propensity to adhere to prescription medications

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Merck's 10 Tenets were identified from reviewing the extensive literature on medication adherence and are used to frame our research strategy.¹

The purpose of the 10 Tenets¹,²:

- Expose common misperceptions regarding medication adherence
- Provide useful insights about patient medication decision-making
- Highlight the importance of patient beliefs in determining adherence behaviors

Patients do not actively communicate their adherence intentions to their health care professional.

- Among 1,100 adult patients in 6 states:

  - 68% said they would never tell their health care provider that they did not want to take a medication.¹
  - 83% of patients would never tell their doctor if they didn’t plan to fill their prescription.¹

Health care professionals assume that their patients are adherent.

- In a study of 138 adult patients receiving treatment, 74% of physicians believed their patients to be highly adherent.¹

Doctors cannot predict adherence with any more efficiency than tossing a coin.²

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There is no such thing as a “nonadherent personality.”

- Medication adherence has not been consistently linked to personality, temperament, or other character dimensions.¹

Adherence to prescription medications is largely unrelated to adherence to self-care and lifestyle recommendations.

- Self-care behaviors are not reliably or consistently associated with a patient’s propensity to adhere to prescription medications.\(^1\)

There is no consistent relationship between demographic characteristics and adherence across disease states.

- Research shows that the effects of demographic characteristics such as age, gender, education, and income on adherence were small. 

- Medication adherence cannot be assumed just by looking at the patient.

Patients want to know about their prescription medications and feel frustrated when they don’t receive enough information.¹

Health care professionals communicate inconsistently about prescription medications.¹

Taking medications is a decision-making process. Patients actively make decisions about their medications.¹

- It is very important to ensure that information about medication and treatment is clearly conveyed to, and understood by, the patient.²

Nonadherent patients believe their nonadherence is rational behavior. It is driven by their beliefs about their treatment, disease, and prognosis, as well as their objective experiences with their treatment and illness.

- Perceived affordability and other personal considerations also factor into the patients’ value decision.¹

Multiple factors influence patient medication decisions, and many patients make their medication decisions outside the physician’s office. For these reasons, a patient’s personal considerations should be determined and addressed at each prescribing visit.²

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Patients can faithfully adhere to one medication, nonfulfill another, and nonpersist to another.

- Patients also may make decisions about each medication based on the information they possess about that medication and the conditions it treats.¹

Understanding the tenets can help health care professionals understand the breadth of patient medication adherence behaviors that are seen in everyday medical practice and also can help dispel common myths about medication adherence.²

Merck’s extensive research has led to the identification of 3 key predictors of medication adherence behavior:\(^1\):

- **Commitment** toward medication – intellectual, psychological, and emotional commitment to the perceived need for treatment and the importance of adherence

- **Concern** about medication – concerns about experiencing side effects, and about short- and long-term safety

- **Cost** of medication – affordability (perceived financial burden) and the value of treatment

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Merck’s Adherence Estimator®
and Other Resources
Early identification of patients with a likelihood for nonadherence could be important to support these patients individually.¹

**COMMITMENT:**
"I don't think I really need this medication."

**COST:**
"I don't think I can afford this medication."

**CONCERN:**
“The possibility of side effects really worries me.”

Understanding patients' beliefs can help with conversations about medication adherence.

The Adherence Estimator is an evidence-based, patient-centered resource designed to help gauge the likelihood of a patient's nonadherence.¹

The Adherence Estimator®: Development Process¹,²

The Adherence Estimator asks questions about 3 key areas:
- Patients’ commitment to the need for prescription medication
- Patients’ concerns about prescription medication
- Patients’ perceived financial burden due to the cost of prescription medication

Use the Adherence Estimator® for patients with certain chronic, asymptomatic conditions who have just received a new prescription for an oral medication.

1. ADMINISTER the Adherence Estimator.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Agree completely</th>
<th>Agree mostly</th>
<th>Agree somewhat</th>
<th>Disagree somewhat</th>
<th>Disagree mostly</th>
<th>Disagree completely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am convinced of the importance of my prescription medicine.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I worry that my prescription medicine will do me more harm than good.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel financially burdened by my out-of-pocket expenses for my prescription medicine.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Short and concise features help make it easy:
- 1 minute to complete
- Immediate scoring

The Adherence Estimator has been validated for oral medications prescribed for certain chronic, asymptomatic conditions (eg, high cholesterol, diabetes). It has not been validated for symptomatic conditions (eg, asthma). For symptomatic conditions, even medications that should be taken continuously may be prescribed or taken on an as-needed basis.

Use the Adherence Estimator® for patients with certain chronic, asymptomatic conditions who have just received a new prescription for an oral medication.

**Keep in mind, the Adherence Estimator¹:**
- Should be used soon after the initiation of a newly prescribed oral medication for certain chronic, asymptomatic conditions
- Is designed to be completed separately for each new medication prescribed
- Can be administered in the physician's office. Ideally, it should be completed by the patient rather than directly administered via interview format by the health care provider

**Take time to reassure patients that:**
- The physician’s office is a place they can feel comfortable answering the survey openly and honestly
- There are no correct answers to the survey—only their opinions and concerns matter

Use the Adherence Estimator for patients with certain chronic, asymptomatic conditions who have just received a new prescription for an oral medication.

2. ASSESS results with the Adherence Estimator Interpretation Guide.¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
<th>High likelihood for nonadherence (less than 32% probability for adherence)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8-36</td>
<td>High likelihood for nonadherence (less than 32% probability for adherence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-7</td>
<td>Medium likelihood for nonadherence (32%-75% probability for adherence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Low likelihood for nonadherence (greater than 75% probability for adherence)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If a patient falls into medium or high categories, you can use the appropriate Response Card to help support your discussion.

- COMMITMENT
  The belief that prescription medicine is necessary

- CONCERN
  The belief that prescription medicine will do more harm than good

- COST
  The belief that prescription medicine is not affordable

- Slide the survey into the Interpretation Guide
- Tally survey score to gauge the likelihood of a patient not adhering to the new medication

Use the Adherence Estimator® for patients with certain chronic, asymptomatic conditions who have just received a new prescription for an oral medication.

3. ADDRESS the patient’s concerns about adherence with personalized communications and helpful resources.

- Speak with the patient about his or her specific issues and concerns
- Provide patient with educational resources that address specific adherence issues
- Provide the card(s) that best describes the barrier(s) as noted below based on the patient’s responses to the Adherence Estimator Survey

Merck also offers a variety of other resources to help you as you help patients understand their condition, treatment plan, and prescribed medications.
Research showed that motivational messages increased patients’ intention toward future adherence.¹

Merck, in collaboration with George Mason University, conducted qualitative and quantitative research to develop, evaluate, and test effectiveness of medication adherence messaging.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commitment</th>
<th>Concern</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Suggested conversation: Your patient understands the importance of taking prescription medication as directed to help manage their health and reach their treatment goals. Tell your patient to keep up the good work.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Suggested conversation: Ask your patient to think of medication as an investment in his or her health. Taking medication the way it is intended to be taken can help him or her manage their health condition and reach their treatment goals. Reinforce with your patient that many health conditions need to be managed every day—even when they are feeling better. Tell your patient not to stop taking their medication just because they are feeling better—it could be that the medication helped them feel that way.</td>
<td>Suggested conversation: Ask your patient to think of their medication as an investment in their health. Your patient taking their medication as you prescribed will give the medication a chance to help your patient reach their treatment goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Suggested conversation: Ask your patient to think of medication as an investment in his or her health. Taking medication the way it is intended to be taken can help him or her manage their health condition and reach their treatment goals. Reinforce with your patient that many health conditions need to be managed every day—even when they are feeling better. Tell your patient not to stop taking their medication just because they are feeling better—it could be that the medication helped them feel that way.</td>
<td>Suggested conversation: Remind your patient that cost should not keep him or her from taking medication as recommended. These options may help: - Discuss whether a 90-day supply might reduce their out-of-pocket prescription cost - Explore other ways to lower their out-of-pocket cost - Find out if your patient qualifies for a program that helps patients receive free or low cost medication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Work with your Merck Representative to identify Merck resources that can help your patients better understand their condition and help you have a better conversation with your patient about the importance of staying on their medication.

Improve communication techniques with:

**The Teach Back Technique**
Interactive workbook for health care providers to help them discover if patients truly understand and are willing to follow their treatment instructions.

– **Tips and cautions for discussing medications with patients**
Example: Before they leave your office, ask patients to explain or demonstrate how they will perform the recommended treatment, monitor the disease, or take the prescribed medication.

– **Questions that can help you get to what patients are really thinking**
Example: Open-ended questions, such as “What are some of the signs you need to watch for that tell you when to take your medicine?” are an effective way to engage the patient.

– **Interactive exercises including sample scenarios of patient interactions**
Work with your Merck Representative to identify Merck resources that can help your patients better understand their condition and help you have a better conversation with your patient about the importance of staying on their medication.

Patient Education Brochures

A full range of brochures covering a number of issues patients may need to understand better.

- How and why it’s important to take your medication(s) as prescribed
- What your condition means to your health and how following your doctor’s treatment plan can help you manage your symptoms
- Tips on how to manage your condition and stick with your treatment plan
Work with your Merck Representative to identify Merck resources that can help your patients better understand their condition and help you have a better conversation with your patient about the importance of staying on their medication.

Resource Cards
Help patients feel more comfortable about taking their medication by handing out the appropriate card(s) at each prescribing visit. Suggestions are offered to help overcome each belief revealed by the Adherence Estimator®.

- Patients will be encouraged to:
  - Learn all they can about their new medication
  - Schedule regular follow-up appointments as directed by their doctor
  - Understand their condition
  - Discuss dosing options
  - Buy in bulk from a mail-order service
Work with your Merck Representative to identify Merck resources that can help your patients better understand their condition and help you have a better conversation with your patient about the importance of staying on their medication.

MerckEngage®
A free health support program, available on desktop and mobile devices, that offers resources to help consumers achieve their health goals in partnership with their HCP, including improved adherence to their HCP’s treatment plan.

– Program resources include:
  o Health condition and general wellness information
  o Recipes and fitness ideas based on national nutrition and fitness guidelines
  o Tools for tracking nutrition, activity, and health conditions
  o Weekly e-mails with tips and updates
  o Rx for Health section, including the Adherence Estimator® and other adherence tools and resources
  o Support and encouragement for caregivers as well as for the people in their care
  o Updates to HCPs on their patients’ activity in MerckEngage
  o Resources and health information in English and Spanish (espanol.merckengage.com)
Adherence is a marathon, not a sprint.¹
