**Medication Adherence: A Provider’s Guide**

“Adherence to medication regimens has been monitored since the time of Hippocrates, when the effects of various potions were recorded with notations of whether the patient had taken them or not.”

“Drugs don’t work in patients who don’t take them.”

- C. Everett Koop

**What is it?**

* The extent to which patients take medications as prescribed by their health care providers, often expressed as a percentage
* Treatment plan should be based on a therapeutic alliance between patient and provider

**Why do we care?**

* According to the AAFP, 6 out of 10 patients do not take their medications as prescribed by their physicians
* Patients with multiple chronic medical problems have the lowest adherence rates
* Poor adherence accounts for increased morbidity, mortality, and health care costs in the United States
  + 125,000 Americans die annually due to poor medication adherence
  + The NEHI estimates improved adherence could result in $290 billion annually in cost reductions or 13% of total health care spending

**Who is at risk?**

* Psych dx (particularly depression) or cognitive impairment
* Complicated and/or costly regimens
* Regimens containing medications with significant side effects
* Poor insight into disease and understanding of treatment importance
* Chronic, asymptomatic disease
* History of poor compliance

**What can we do?**

* Identify non-adherence via patient interactions, refill rates, and clinical assessment
* Elicit feelings about patient’s ability to follow his or her regimen, barriers to adherence, and potential improvements
* Inform of value of regimen and importance of adherence
* Simplify and reduce cost of regimen as much as possible via once-a-day dosing, combination pills, blister packs ([BACON EAST](http://www.baconeast.com/)), discount programs, formulary prescribing
* Mobilize family, friends, and use of community resources (i.e. treatment nurse, resource nurse, LVN, etc.)
* Technologize using phone apps, electronic reminders, and other innovations as they become available to the mainstream
* Reinforce desirable behaviors

**Provider Resources:**

[Prescriptions for a Healthy America](http://adhereforhealth.org/resources/): Coalition including the AAFP charged with raising awareness and advancing public policy in the area of medication non-adherence. Website has a list of provider resources.

Osterberg L and Blaschke T. Adherence to Medication. *NEJM* 2005;353: 487-97

[WHO Report on Adherence to Long-term Therapies](http://apps.who.int/medicinedocs/en/d/Js4883e/6.html)

[List of Related Phone Apps](http://www.pharmacist.com/medication-adherence-there%E2%80%99s-app)

[List of all FDA-approved Combination Drugs](http://www.cengagesites.com/academic/assets/sites/5407/pdf/appendices/appendix-8_combinationdrugs.pdf)

[CCHP Preferred Drug List](http://cchealth.org/healthplan/pdf/pdl.pdf)

[Medi-Cal Preferred Drug List](http://files.medi-cal.ca.gov/pubsdoco/manual/man_query.asp?wSearch=%28%23filename+drugscdl*.doc+OR+%23filename+drugscdl*.zip%29&wFLogo=Contract+Drugs+List&wFLogoH=52&wFLogoW=516&wAlt=Contract+Drugs+List&wPath=N)

**Community Resources**

**Coast2Coast Rx Card**  (1-800-931-8872)

Provides discounted prescription card which may lower the price of prescription drugs. Available at most libraries, hospitals and participating pharmacies.

www.coast2coastrx.com/contracostaca 

**Goodrx.com**

Price comparisons for specific drugs in a certain geographic location

**NeedyMeds**  (www.needymeds.org)

Provides information on medicine and healthcare assistance programs based on needs; income/legal status varies by provider; Internet only

**Partnership for Prescription Assistance / Rx Help for Californians**  (1-888-477-2669)

Provides prescription assistance to individuals by directing them to drug companies that provide their medications free or low-cost; income/legal status varies by drug provider; www.pparx.org 

**Rx Assist** (www.rxassist.org)

Provides a list of drug companies that provide expense assistance; income/legal status varies by drug provider, Internet only.

**Rx Outreach** (1-800-769-3880)

Provides information on resources for mail-order prescription assistance; income/legal status varies by drug provider; www.rxoutreach.com 

**Rite Aid**: $10/30 days; $16 for 90 days; [500 generics](http://content.riteaid.com/rx-savings/RX_Savings_Directory_10252013.pdf)

**Target Stores**: $4/30 day, $10/90 days; [300 generics](http://www.target.com/pharmacy/generics-condition)

**Walgreens**: $5/30 days, $10/90 days, [400 generics](http://www.walgreens.com/psc/VPG_List_Update_10-15-2013.pdf); $20 individual, $35 family enrollment

**Walmart**: $4/30 day, $10/90 days; [300 generics](http://i.walmartimages.com/i/if/hmp/fusion/customer_list.pdf)