

## **Building Adherence into Your Pharmacy – 5 Steps to Get it Right**

Pharmaceutical stakeholders — from manufacturers to providers, to payers and pharmacies like yours, continue to fight the adherence fight. How can stakeholders ensure patients maintain their medication regimens?

It starts with ownership. Every stakeholder owns a large piece of adherence, but it frequently falls on the community pharmacy to make it happen. That said, there are ways for community pharmacies to help patients stick to therapy, the way it was prescribed. And you can do this by building adherence into your practice, starting now without costly technology and tool additions.



### **1. Educate Patients on Real-World Expectations**

New therapies begin with great promise for patients, but when a provider or pharmacy doesn't prepare a patient for all potential outcomes, the patient may stop taking the drug.

If the patient starts feeling better, they might think the drug is no longer needed. If they feel worse, they simply stop therapy to avoid side effects. If the patient experiences no change whatsoever, they may think the drug isn't working.

For new therapies, prescribers may typically spend less than a minute telling their patients about how a drug works and how they should expect to feel, and the patient must get more information by asking questions. Questions are often way outside of a patient's comfort zone.

You, the pharmacist, can fill in any therapy information gaps and provide an additional level of service to your patients. The more time you spend with a patient to explain their condition, how the drug works and why it is important to take the medication consistently, the greater the likelihood they will remain adherent to therapy. Patients with chronic conditions are more likely to stay adherent when they feel assured that their medication is "working," no matter how subtle the signs.

### **2. Nurture Patient Relationships**

Patients see and interact with pharmacists much more often than with prescribers. Pharmacists and pharmacy staff should take at least a few minutes to talk and establish a relationship with every patient who walks through the door.

This step can make a huge difference in a patient's therapy success. Pharmacists should ask patients how they are feeling, if a new dosage is working better, or if they are having any new side effects. All

these questions can start a conversation and allow a patient to feel open to voicing concerns that could lead to non-adherence later. And, since patients may have more questions once they are on therapy than before they begin therapy, a regular, open dialogue is important for building trust.

### 3. Team up with Prescribers

Good communications between the prescriber and the pharmacist is vital. Pharmacists can connect with a prescriber and say, “We have 30 patients [like you] that use my pharmacy. Most [stick] to their therapy, but here is a potential [adherence] issue I see on a few patients.”

This builds the understanding that you and the patient are on the same health care team. With the growth of accountable care organizations (ACOs) and evolving payer oversight, this type of model is becoming more prevalent as the health care team evaluates improving patient outcomes. This has an added benefit of giving patients the important sense of belonging to a team that regularly communicates about their care.

Many independent pharmacies are involved in community activities outside of their business, which provides opportunities to meet prescribers and interact in person, building deeper relationships.

### 4. Engage the Staff

An efficient and team-based workflow benefits your pharmacy and patients. Pharmacists can engage the whole staff regularly by holding staff meetings and discussing everyone’s role in caring for patients.

Posting CMS Star Quality Rating scores in the back of the pharmacy can engage the staff and stress the importance of managing a patient’s care.

Web-based tools you have access to also can gather pharmacy claims data from health plans and PBMs and produce monthly scorecards that can be shared among the pharmacy staff.

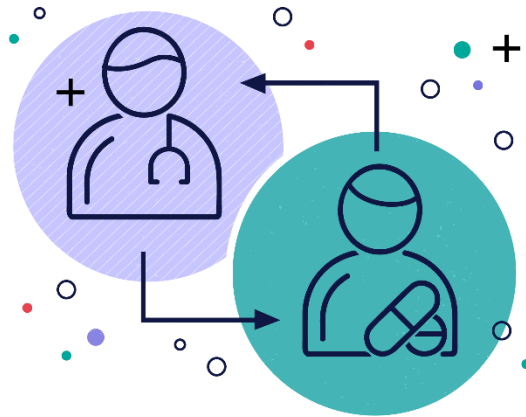


When everyone—from the front-end clerk to the pharmacy technician—embraces their role as a part of the care team, patient engagement improves.

### 5. Learn and Use Available Technologies

Having systems in place to monitor and track patient adherence, proactively communicate and document interactions can save pharmacies, like yours, a lot of time and costs while improving patient outcomes.

Your pharmacy should look for reporting tools that provide real-time access to patient profiles and visibility into trends over time. Some pharmacy systems also



have the capability to highlight non-adherent patients for pharmacy interaction. The key is to implement tools and or processes to allow pharmacies to more effectively target patients that need the most care.

## **Closing Thoughts**

Successful adherence is not something a pharmacy “lucks” into. It’s a formula of practices and tools that makes it possible for you, the pharmacist, and your patients, to take greater control over therapy regimens and outcomes.

Partnering with companies like Keystone can help independent pharmacies stay up-to-date on adherence trends and challenges and access the best tools to make adherence successful for all stakeholders.

If you’re not a member yet, join us. If you are a member, make sure you’re leveraging your benefits and maximizing your pharmacy’s success.