Patient Adherence

TALKING POINTS

- The term medication “non-adherence” or noncompliance refers to a patient deviating from the written or verbal instructions regarding the correct use of a medication. It can refer to the failure to take a prescribed medication or to any modification of the instructions without the consent of a trained health care professional.

- Poor adherence can lead to substantial worsening of a disease and even death. For example, several studies have shown that as many as half of all patients who use antihypertensive drugs for high blood pressure stop taking their medication within six months to four years of starting the treatment.

- The economic costs of non-adherence alone are estimated at nearly $100 billion a year.

- A recent nationwide telephone survey conducted by the National Community Pharmacists Association and Pharmacists for the Protection of Patient Care measured consumer behavior relating to medication adherence.

- The survey found that while most consumers believe they are highly compliant when it comes to taking their prescription medications (64% said they follow their physician’s instructions “extremely closely”), the survey found they are not as compliant as they believe.

- Nearly three-fourths (74%) of respondents admitted to non-adherent behaviors in the past.
  - Nearly half (49%) said they had forgotten to take a prescribed medication.
  - Nearly one-third (31%) had not filled a prescription they were given.
  - More than one in 10 (13%) had taken someone else’s prescription medicine.
  - Nearly one-quarter (24%) had taken less than the recommended dosage.
  - Nearly three out of 10 (29%) had stopped taking a medication before the supply ran out.

- Less than half of respondents (48%) said they had consulted their doctor or pharmacist before making these changes.

- Pharmacists can play an important role in reducing non-adherence.

- Pharmacists are the most accessible health care provider and have the most expertise about prescription medications.

- The survey found that more than eight out of 10 (83%) respondents agree that pharmacists can play a role in improving adherence by helping to make sure patients are taking their prescription medications correctly.
  - More than two-thirds (68%) believe pharmacists are more knowledgeable than other health care professionals when it comes to information about prescription medications.
  - Nearly nine out of 10 (86%) say they would be likely to talk to their pharmacist about their medications.

- I’d like to tell you about the steps my pharmacy staff members take every day to ensure patients are taking their medications correctly (use this opportunity to give your guest a guided tour of your pharmacy and point out the steps you take to ensure patients are getting and taking the correct medicine).