

Transcript Details

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ReachMD
www.reachmd.com
info@reachmd.com
(866) 423-7849

Keys to Helping Improve Medication Adherence: Communication Strategies

Podcast 2 Script: Keys to Helping Improve Medication Adherence: Communication Strategies

Announcer:	<p>This is ReachMD. Welcome to this medical industry feature titled, "Keys to Helping Improve Medication Adherence: Communication Strategies." The following program has been created and paid for by Merck Sharp & Dohme Corp., a subsidiary of Merck & Co., Inc., and is intended for health care professionals in the United States. The references for the information discussed today are available in the transcript which can be accessed on the site where you have listened to this podcast.</p> <p>Let's review some strategies that may be used to help improve medication adherence.</p>

References:

1. Peck CL, King NJ. *Drugs*. 1985;30:78–84.
2. Brega AG et al. *AHRQ Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit* 2nd ed. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ); 2015.
3. Starr B, Sacks R. *Improving Outcomes for Patients With Chronic Disease*. The Fund for Public Health in New York, Inc.; 2010

Health care professionals should strive to connect with patients. This begins with the first contact you have with a patient and can include something as simple as introducing yourself when you walk in the room.¹ Try not to appear rushed. Enter the room slowly, sit down, and look at the patient.²

Try using open-ended questions.¹ Yes-or-no questions make it easy for patients to keep quiet about their problems, whereas open-ended questions invite them to talk about any issues they may be having.¹ For example, asking “What gets in the way of taking your medicines?” encourages a specific response. In contrast, common questions like “Do you have any problems with your medicines?” or “Is everything okay with your medicines?” allows patients to simply nod or shake their heads.

When asking questions, address the patient’s concerns first. A good question to ask is “What concerns you most about your health right now?” Listening to patients’ concerns for 1 minute can be enough for a patient to express critical information.

You should also be aware of nonverbal signals.³ Although you may say the right words, your facial expressions and body language can undermine your efforts. Do your arms lie loosely in your lap or are they tight across your chest? Do you maintain eye contact to show your interest or are you looking at your computer? Do you smile and nod at the patient? These small signals may encourage patients to talk openly.

References:

1. Oyekan E et al. *Perm J*. 2009;13:62–69.
2. Brunton SA. *J Fam Pract*. 2011;60(Suppl):S1–S8.
3. Brega AG et al. *AHRQ Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit*. 2nd ed. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ); 2015.

Having strong communication skills is also an important way to build trust, and involving patients in the decision-making process may help build that trust.¹

Providing clear instructions may help prevent misunderstandings.^{2,3} Clear instructions include speaking simplistically, providing information in multiple formats, and limiting new information at any one visit.^{2,3} It also includes asking patients to repeat back their understanding of information you have given to them in their own words; this can help ensure that they have understood the information you are providing.^{2,3}

Remember, the patients are assessing you as a health care professional. Are you caring? Are you a good listener? Are you taking their concerns seriously?

	<p>How health care professionals talk to patients about a new medication may be very important toward improving medication adherence.</p> <p>Each visit is an opportunity to build trust, and that trust does a lot to encourage patients to talk openly about their concerns and to share any adverse effects they may be having in subsequent appointments.</p>
<p>Reference:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. National Council on Patient Information and Education (NCPIE). Enhancing prescription medicine adherence: a national action plan. August 2007. talkaboutrx.org/documents/enhancing_prescription_medicine_adherence.pdf. Accessed July 23, 2018. 	<p>For patients who are already taking medications, health care professionals should review and ask about the patient's experience with each medication.¹</p> <p>For example, find out a patient's understanding of their medications by asking them what each of their medications is for and whether they feel that it's helping. Ask them if they have any questions or concerns about each medication.</p> <p>This is an opportunity to explain the importance of taking each medication as prescribed and potentially problem solve.</p>
<p>References:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Osterberg L, Blaschke T. <i>N Engl J Med</i>. 2005;353:487–497. 2. Goldberg AI et al. <i>Soc Sci Med</i>. 1998;47:1873–1876. 	<p>We can do a lot to improve medication adherence by not making assumptions about patients and their medication-taking behaviors.</p> <p>For example,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't assume that patients understand all the information they are given or that patients who are having problems will ask for help,¹ • Don't assume that if a patient understands the information they are given that they will take the medication as required,² and • Don't assume that just because a patient is taking their medication correctly now that they will continue to do so.¹
<p>References:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rollnick S et al. <i>Motivational Interviewing in Health Care</i>. The Guilford Press; 2008. 2. Kreps GL et al. <i>Patient Educ Couns</i>. 2011;83:375–381. 	<p>One strategy is using motivational interviewing to connect with patients. Motivational interviewing is a collaborative way to connect healthy behavior change with what the patient cares about.¹</p> <p>Research has shown that motivational messages increase a patient's intention toward future adherence.²</p> <p>Encouraging healthy behavior change—such as medication adherence—by applying motivational interviewing within the space of a few minutes is a highly skilled process.¹ However, just as many of us have taken lessons to improve our golf game or whatever interest you may have, motivational interviewing skills may improve with practice.</p>

Reference: 1. Rollnick S et al. <i>Motivational Interviewing in Health Care</i> . The Guilford Press; 2008.	Motivational interviewing has 4 guiding principles that can be remembered with the acronym RULE. ¹ R stands for resist the righting reflex. The righting reflex is the tendency to correct another person's behavior. Health care professionals generally have a powerful tendency to "fix things." Unfortunately, human beings have a natural tendency to resist persuasion. Thus, the righting reflex often increases a patient's resistance to change. ¹ U stands for understand. Understand the patient's motivations. A patient's own reasons for change are likely to trigger behavior change. Be interested in the patient's perceptions of his or her current situation and their motivations for change. If your appointment time is limited, it is better to ask patients why they would want to make a change and how, rather than tell them that they should. ¹ L stands for listen. Motivational interviewing involves as much listening as informing. The answers to behavior change lie with the patient, and finding these answers requires listening. ¹ E stands for empower. Health outcomes may improve when patients take an active interest in their health care. ¹ These 4 principles are essential for effective motivational interviewing.
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<p>References:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Brega AG et al. <i>AHRQ Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit</i>. 2nd ed. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ); 2015. 2. Oyekan E et al. <i>Perm J</i>. 2009;13:62–69. 	<p>One thing healthcare professionals need to be aware of is how we communicate.¹ Just because we think that we are communicating clearly doesn't mean that we are.</p> <p>There are many examples of miscommunication that may lead to errors in medication-taking.²</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may have heard the story of a 2-year-old toddler who went to the doctor's office with an ear infection. The mother was told to give the child a teaspoon of antibiotic twice daily. While this seems clear to us, the mother proceeded to pour a teaspoon of the medication into her daughter's ear twice a day. <p>To help avoid these misunderstandings¹:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to use plain, nonmedical language; • Limit information to what the patient needs to know and do; • Use visual aids, such as pictures, diagrams, or models; and • Encourage patients to ask questions.
<p>Reference:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Brega AG et al. <i>AHRQ Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit</i>. 2nd ed. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ); 2015. 	<p>Another strategy you can use is the teach-back method, which is a technique that helps ensure patient understanding, and can be done by anyone in a practice.¹</p> <p>With the teach-back method, you first provide some information to a patient and then ask them to explain it back to you in their own words. If they can explain it back to you, then they understand. If they are unable to, then try to clarify and reassess their understanding.¹</p>
<p>References:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Brega AG et al. <i>AHRQ Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit</i>. 2nd ed. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ); 2015. 2. Davis TC et al. <i>Ann Intern Med</i>. 2006;145:887–894. 	<p>Let's look at this example:</p> <p>"Take 2 tablets twice daily,"¹ is a common medical instruction. While the words are short and the instructions seem clear, many people get confused.</p> <p>In one sub-study, about one-third of patients with low literacy skills could correctly indicate how many tablets to take.²</p> <p>If the label had more explicit instructions, such as "Take 2 tablets at 8 AM and 2 tablets at 8 PM," misunderstandings might be less common.</p> <p>However, we can't always control what is put on a label. Therefore, the teach-back method can be used to help ensure that patients know how to take their medication.</p>

<p>References:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Brega AG et al. <i>AHRQ Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit</i>. 2nd ed. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ); 2015. 2. National Patient Safety Foundation. Ask Me 3. npsf.org/askme3. Accessed July 23, 2018. 	<p>Something that is often overlooked but is critical to optimizing care is that we want to encourage patients to become active members of their health care team.¹</p> <p>Consider using “Ask Me 3” to activate your patients.¹ Ask Me 3 is a program that encourages patients to ask 3 specific questions²:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is my main problem? 2. What do I need to do? and 3. Why is it important for me to do this? <p>Your body language may also encourage questions. Sit at the same level as the patient, look at them when talking, and present yourself as having time and wanting to listen.¹ These actions may go a long way toward making patients feel comfortable enough to ask questions.</p> <p>The act of asking for the patient’s opinion communicates that we value it and fosters a collaborative relationship.</p>
<p>Reference:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Brega AG et al. <i>AHRQ Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit</i>. 2nd ed. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ); 2015. 	<p>Brown Bag Medication Review is another strategy that can be used to help improve medication adherence. It encourages patients to bring all of their medications and supplements to their medical appointments.¹</p> <p>Brown Bag Medication Review is more than just writing a list of a patient’s medications. It allows you to verify what the patient is taking and how they are taking it,¹ helps you identify and even possibly avoid medication errors and drug interactions,¹ and gives you a chance to help the patient take their medications correctly.¹</p>
<p>Reference:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Brega AG et al. <i>AHRQ Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit</i>. 2nd ed. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ); 2015. 	<p>There are several important factors to the success of Brown Bag Medication Review.¹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First, patients have to be asked to bring in their medications. It is important to set this expectation. • Next, once patients bring their medications to the appointment, it is important to set them out for review. • Then a provider or trained staff member has to review at least 1 medication with the patient. Reviewing this reinforces medication adherence and its importance to a patient’s health.

<p>References:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. McHorney CA. <i>Curr Med Res Opin</i> 2009;25:215–238. 2. Prochaska JO, Velicer WF. <i>Am J Health Promot</i>. 1997;12:38–48. 	<p>Because medication taking is an ongoing decision-making process,¹ the decisional balance tool can also be useful in helping patients weigh the pros and cons of taking a medication.²</p> <p>When using decisional balance, allow the patient to complete the tool. This lets the patient tell you the advantages and disadvantages of taking a medicine and gives you the opportunity to address the importance of taking their medication.²</p>
<p>Reference:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jacobson KL et al. <i>How to Create a Pill Card</i>. Rockville, MD: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ); 2008. 	<p>A final strategy to consider using is a medication worksheet. It can be used¹:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To help improve a patient's understanding about their medications, • To help remind patients when to take their medications, and • To identify any concerns that the patient may want to discuss with the doctor. <p>By incorporating the appropriate strategies into your practice, you may help improve medication adherence among your patients.</p> <p>Thank you for your time and attention today.</p>
<p>Announcer Wraps:</p>	<p>The preceding program was brought to you by Merck. To view additional programs on medication adherence from Merck, visit ReachMD.com/MedAdherence. This is ReachMD. Be Part of the Knowledge.</p>

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