

The Role of Pharmacy Services in Medication Adherence and Compliance

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DESCRIPTION

Medication adherence and compliance are critical factors in achieving optimal health outcomes, particularly for patients with chronic conditions. Poor adherence to prescribed medications can lead to worsening health conditions, increased hospitalizations, and higher healthcare costs. Pharmacy services play a pivotal role in promoting medication adherence and compliance, using their expertise and patient-centric approach to improve health outcomes. This article explores the significant impact of pharmacy services on medication adherence and compliance and highlights strategies pharmacists can employ to enhance patient adherence.

Understanding medication adherence and compliance

Medication adherence refers to the extent to which patients take their medications as prescribed by their healthcare providers, including the correct dose, timing and frequency. Compliance, on the other hand, focuses on the degree to which patients follow the healthcare provider's recommendations and guidelines regarding medication use. Both adherence and compliance are essential for achieving therapeutic goals, preventing disease progression, and reducing the risk of complications.

Non-adherence can be intentional or unintentional. Intentional non-adherence occurs when patients deliberately choose not to follow their medication regimen due to factors such as perceived side effects, lack of understanding of the medication's benefits, or cost concerns. Unintentional non-adherence may result from forgetfulness, misunderstanding instructions, or physical barriers like difficulty opening medication containers.

The role of pharmacy services

Pharmacy services are integral to healthcare, providing medication management, patient education, and support to ensure that patients adhere to their prescribed therapies. Pharmacists, as accessible healthcare professionals, have the

expertise to address various factors contributing to non-adherence and compliance issues.

Patient education and counseling

One of the primary roles of pharmacy services is to educate patients about their medications. Pharmacists provide detailed information on how to take medications, potential side effects, and the importance of adherence in managing health conditions. Through personalized counseling sessions, pharmacists can address patients' concerns, dispel myths about medications, and emphasize the benefits of following the prescribed regimen.

Patient education extends beyond verbal communication. Pharmacists often provide written materials, such as medication guides and brochures that reinforce verbal instructions and serve as a reference for patients. By ensuring that patients fully understand their medications and the importance of adherence, pharmacists can empower them to take an active role in managing their health.

Medication Therapy Management (MTM)

Medication Therapy Management (MTM) is a comprehensive service provided by pharmacists to optimize therapeutic outcomes for patients. MTM involves reviewing all medications a patient is taking, assessing for potential drug interactions, and identifying any barriers to adherence. Pharmacists work closely with patients to develop personalized medication plans that are easy to follow and fit into their daily routines.

MTM also includes monitoring patients' progress, adjusting medication regimens as needed, and providing ongoing support to address any challenges they may face. By offering MTM services, pharmacists can help ensure that patients adhere to their medications and achieve the desired health outcomes.

Simplifying medication regimens

Complex medication regimens can be a significant barrier to adherence, particularly for patients with multiple chronic

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conditions. Pharmacists can help simplify these regimens by recommending combination medications, adjusting dosing schedules, or providing medications in forms that are easier to take, such as liquid or chewable tablets for those who have difficulty swallowing pills.

Pharmacists can also utilize tools like pill organizers, medication calendars, and automated reminders to help patients manage their medications more effectively. By simplifying medication regimens and providing practical tools, pharmacists can reduce the risk of non-adherence and improve patients' ability to follow their prescribed therapies.

Medication costs can be a major obstacle to adherence, especially for patients without insurance or with limited financial resources. Pharmacists can play an important role in addressing cost barriers by helping patients identify more affordable medication options, such as generic equivalents or therapeutic alternatives that are equally effective but less expensive.

Pharmacists can also assist patients in accessing financial assistance programs, such as manufacturer discounts, patient assistance programs, or government subsidies. By working to reduce the financial burden of medications, pharmacists can help patients adhere to their prescribed treatments and avoid compromising their health due to cost concerns.

Providing behavioral support

Behavioral factors, such as forgetfulness or lack of motivation, can significantly impact medication adherence. Pharmacists can provide behavioral support through techniques such as motivational interviewing, which helps patients explore and resolve ambivalence about taking their medications. By understanding patients' beliefs and attitudes towards their

medications, pharmacists can tailor their interventions to encourage adherence.

Pharmacists can also collaborate with other healthcare providers, such as physicians and nurses, to develop integrated care plans that address both medical and behavioral aspects of adherence. This multidisciplinary approach ensures that patients receive comprehensive support to maintain their medication regimens.

Advancing technology

Advancements in technology have opened new avenues for improving medication adherence. Pharmacists can use digital tools, such as mobile health apps, electronic reminders, and telepharmacy services, to provide remote support and monitor patients' adherence. These technologies enable pharmacists to track patients' medication-taking behaviors, send timely reminders, and provide virtual consultations to address any issues that arise.

CONCLUSION

Telepharmacy, in particular, allows pharmacists to reach patients in remote or underserved areas, providing them with the same level of care and support as those in urban settings. By embracing technology, pharmacists can enhance their ability to support patients in adhering to their medications and achieving better health outcomes. Pharmacy services play a critical role in promoting medication adherence and compliance, ultimately contributing to improved patient health and reduced healthcare costs. Through patient education, Medication Therapy Management, simplification of medication regimens, cost assistance, behavioral support, and the use of technology, pharmacists are uniquely positioned to address the various factors that influence adherence.