

# Significance of Medication Adherence and Risks Associated with Non-adherence

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## Opinion Article

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## ABOUT THE STUDY

Medication adherence, defined as the extent to which patients take prescribed medications as directed, is a critical factor in the success of any medication therapy. This article explores the importance of medication adherence and its impact on patient health outcomes. By examining the reasons behind non-adherence, the potential consequences it can have on patients, and strategies to improve adherence, the significance of this topic becomes evident.

### Reasons for non-adherence

Non-adherence to medication regimens can occur due to various factors, such as forgetfulness, cost constraints, complexity of treatment plans, fear of side effects, and lack of understanding or belief in the effectiveness of the prescribed medications. Patients with chronic conditions often face lifelong medication requirements, making adherence an on-going challenge. Furthermore, certain demographics, such as the elderly, may experience difficulties in managing their medications, leading to higher rates of nonadherence.

### Consequences of non-adherence

Non-adherence to prescribed medications can significantly compromise patient health outcomes. It can exacerbate existing conditions, increase the risk of hospitalization and mortality rates, and hinder the effectiveness of healthcare interventions. Patients may experience suboptimal symptom control, progression of the disease, and reduced quality of life.

Non-adherence also places a substantial economic burden on healthcare systems worldwide, estimated to cost billions of dollars each year due to preventable hospital admissions and prolonged treatments. The consequences of non-adherence to a prescribed treatment or medication can have significant negative effects on an individual's health and well-being. Some possible consequences include:

**Worsening of symptoms:** Not following a prescribed treatment plan can lead to the worsening of symptoms. This can result in increased pain, discomfort, or other health issues.

**Disease progression:** Certain conditions, such as chronic diseases or infections, require consistent treatment to manage or control the disease. Non-adherence can allow the disease to progress, leading to further complications, disability, or even death.

**Reduced quality of life:** Failure to follow a prescribed treatment plan can result in reduced quality of life. This may include limitations in daily activities, decreased mobility, or mental health issues due to a lack of control over symptoms.

### Strategies to improve medication adherence

Pharmacists play a key role in improving medication adherence through various strategies. These strategies include patient education, simplification of medication regimens, assessing patients' understanding and willingness to follow their treatment plans, and exploring potential barriers to adherence. Pharmacist-led interventions, such as medication synchronization programs, reminder systems, and adherence counselling, have shown promising results in enhancing medication adherence rates. Additionally, incorporating technology solutions into healthcare systems, such as smartphone applications and telemedicine, can provide patients with reminders, electronic refill requests, and virtual consultations, thereby promoting adherence. Collaboration with other healthcare providers, such as physicians and nurses, is crucial in fostering a team approach to patient care and addressing any concerns or barriers that could hinder adherence.

### Importance of medication adherence in special populations

Certain patient populations, such as those with mental health disorders, HIV/AIDS, or chronic disease, require particular attention regarding medication adherence. Failure to adhere to antipsychotic medications in the case of individuals with mental health disorders can lead to relapse, hospitalization, and increased healthcare costs. Similarly, non-adherence to antiretroviral therapy in HIV/AIDS patients can contribute to medication resistance and disease progression. Therefore, targeted interventions, tailored educational materials, and support systems are necessary to ensure optimal adherence in these special populations. Medication adherence plays a vital role in improving patient health outcomes and reducing healthcare costs. Understanding the reasons for non-adherence and its potential consequences is crucial in developing effective strategies to promote adherence. Pharmacist-led interventions, technological solutions, and specialized programs for vulnerable populations are essential components in achieving optimal medication adherence. By focusing on patient education, simplification of treatment regimens, and addressing patient concerns, healthcare professionals can make a significant impact on patients' lives and overall healthcare outcomes.