Barriers and Solutions to Help Patients Adhere to their Medications

Possible barriers to ensuring optimal medication management should be identified in advance. Here are common barriers and possible solutions from the H2H Community. Anticipating and addressing barriers to medications can help patients receive the appropriate care they need and potentially prevent them from being unnecessarily readmitted.

Common Barriers	Possible Solutions	Available Tools
Medication Barriers		
Medication Complexity	- Use of combination medications to reduce the number of pills - Simplifying dosing regimens - Patient handouts on medications - Use of pillbox - Obtain meds from a pharmacy that provides prepacking or "blister packing	*Patient and Provider to do together:* - AHRQ Pill Card - NTOCC Medication List - My Pill Box Medication Schedule - Pill Box
Side effects or adverse effects from the medication	- Choose medications with the least amount of side effects taking the patient's lifestyle into account - Avoid medications that cause daytime sleepiness - Educate patient/caregiver of possible side effects - Educate patient/caregiver on how to manage side effects when they occur and when to call their clinician - Counsel patient on fatigue which occurs during first two weeks of beta blocker initiation or titration then subsides	*Patient and Provider Tools:* - PINNACLE Heart Failure Practice Solutions - CardioSmart Patient Resources
Clinician Barriers		
Poor Communication with clinician	- Involve the patient perspective and goals into medication plan - Ask patient questions regarding access and cost - Involve patients' support system in discussions - Develop a trusting and open relationship	*Provider Tools:* - AHRQ Tips for Communicating Clearly - Qualidigm Teaching Patients Module - Kaiser's Clinician-Patient communication module - The Joint Commission Hospital Communication Roadmap
Lack of feedback and ongoing reinforcement from clinician	- Motivate patients to engage in self-care strategies - Act as cheerleaders, reassure patients that they can do it, be positive and speak in a non-judgmental tone - Ask patients if they have difficulties with taking medications - Consider follow-up by nurses, nurse practitioners, in addition to a cardiologist or primary care clinician	*Provider Tools:* - Call Script - AHRQ Follow-up Options

Patient Barriers		
Low Health Literacy	• Assess patients upon admission for health literacy level • Communicate with patients at their appropriate literacy level • Use health literacy tool	***Provider Tools:*** • Health Literacy Tools
Patient forgets to take their medicine	• Provide a visual reminder which includes the medication type, dose, and frequency such as a medication tracker or pill organizer. • Discuss linking medication regimen to patient's daily habits • Remind patient of the need to take their prescribed medications via electronic devise reminders (i.e. phone call email, text message, alarm reminders) • Confirm whether patient's primary support (spouse, child, friend) knows patient medication regimen and can help patients take medications • Discuss what to do if patient forgets to take medication • Consider follow-up by nurses, nurse practitioners, pharmacists, in addition to a cardiologist or primary care clinician	***Provider Tools:*** • AHRQ Improve Med Adherence and Accuracy • Medication Compliance Aids (PDF) ***Patient Tools:*** • Med Action Plan for Heart Failure • AHRQ Pill Card • Medication Daily Trackers
Lack of knowledge about medication and its use	• Educate about the medication: its benefit, side-effect management, duration of therapy , and what the patient can expect • Address patient's misconceptions about medications • Reinforce importance of taking ALL prescribed medications as indicated • Use the teach-back method to ensure patient understanding of medications • Teach patients how to read prescription labels	***Provider Tools:*** • SHM Teach Back Process • AHRQ Teach Back Method • Qualidigm Key Recommendations for Treating Patient with Heart Failure Module ***Patient Tools*** • CardioSmart Patient Resources • HFSA Patient Medicines Module • How to read prescription labels
Transportation	• Provide options to patients for pharmacies they can most easily access • Identify a family member or friend to transport patient to the pharmacy • Provide shuttle service or a taxi voucher to patients	• Mail order Pharmacies • Provider taxi cab vouchers

		Provider (Social Worker) Tools:

Cost	• Prescribe generic drugs rather than brand names
	• Ensure patient prescriptions are filled and the patient receives them or a temporary supply prior to discharge
	• Provide list of discount pharmacies
	• Enroll in financial assistance programs per social worker
	• Determine eligibility for additional financial assistance programs per hospital case managers
		• AHRQ Tips for helping Patient's with medicine costs
		• Sample Medication Assistance Programs
		  1. Needymeds
		  2. Benefits Check Up
		  3. Partnership for Prescription Assistance
		  4. RxAssist
		  5. Medicare

Denial of condition	• Explore patient readiness to accept the disease condition • Educate the patient about the benefit of treating their condition • Motivate patient to adhere to their treatment plan to achieve personal goals (i.e. play with grandchildren)	
Lack of social support	• Organize a patient support group • Have a volunteer advocate • Identify family member or friend to provide support	Provider Tools: • Link Patients to non-medical support
Cultural or Religious beliefs	• Acknowledge and understand patient's cultural or religious beliefs regarding taking medication • Develop a medication plan consistent with patient religious/cultural beliefs	Provider Tools: • How to address different languages • Culture and other considerations