

Better Medication Adherence and Health

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Abstract

Medication adherence is a critical aspect of health management, yet it remains a significant challenge for many individuals. This essay explores the importance of better medication adherence for improved health outcomes in 2017. The essay delves into the reasons behind poor medication adherence, strategies to enhance adherence, and the impact of improved adherence on health. The study incorporates relevant literature to analyze the topic and offers recommendations for overcoming barriers to medication adherence.

Keywords: Medication adherence, health outcomes, barriers, strategies, recommendations

Introduction:

Medication adherence, defined as the extent to which patients take medications as prescribed by their healthcare providers, is a crucial component of effective healthcare management. Poor adherence to medication regimens can lead to reduced treatment efficacy, increased healthcare costs, and poor health outcomes. In 2017, despite advancements in medical technology and treatment options, medication non-adherence remained a pervasive issue in healthcare. This essay aims to explore the importance of better medication adherence in improving health outcomes in 2017 and beyond.

Medication adherence is a critical component of effective healthcare that significantly impacts patient outcomes. It refers to the extent to which patients take medications as prescribed by their healthcare providers. Poor adherence can lead to treatment failure, increased healthcare costs, and ultimately, diminished quality of life. This essay explores the importance of medication adherence, its implications for health, and strategies to improve it.

Importance of Medication Adherence

Effective management of chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, and asthma relies heavily on medication adherence. Studies have shown that patients who adhere to their medication regimens experience better health outcomes, including lower hospitalization rates and reduced healthcare costs. For instance, a study published in the American Journal of Managed Care found that patients with high adherence to antihypertensive medication had a significantly lower risk of cardiovascular events compared to those with low adherence.

Conversely, non-adherence can lead to serious health consequences. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), non-adherence is estimated to be around 50% in chronic disease management, contributing to approximately 125,000 deaths annually in the United States alone. This stark statistic underscores the critical need for strategies to enhance adherence.

Implications for Health

The implications of medication adherence extend beyond individual patients to the healthcare system as a whole. High levels of non-adherence can result in increased healthcare costs due to the need for more frequent doctor visits, additional medications, and hospitalizations. A report by the New England Healthcare Institute estimates that non-adherence costs the U.S. economy nearly \$300 billion annually.

Furthermore, medication non-adherence can exacerbate health disparities. Populations with limited access to healthcare resources, such as low-income individuals and racial minorities, often face additional barriers to adherence. This can lead to worse health outcomes and increased rates of morbidity and mortality within these communities.

Strategies to Improve Medication Adherence

Improving medication adherence requires a multifaceted approach that addresses both patient-related and system-related factors. Some effective strategies include:

Patient Education: Providing comprehensive education about the importance of adherence, potential side effects, and the consequences of non-adherence can empower patients. Educational interventions, such as counseling sessions and informational resources, can enhance understanding and motivation.

Simplification of Regimens: Simplifying medication regimens, such as through combination pills or once-daily dosing, can make adherence easier. Healthcare providers should consider the complexity of medication schedules when prescribing treatments.

Use of Technology: Mobile health applications and reminders can significantly enhance adherence. Technologies like pillboxes with alarms or smartphone apps that track medication intake can remind patients to take their medications on time.

Support Systems: Encouraging support from family members, friends, or healthcare providers can improve adherence. Social support can motivate patients to stick to their regimens and provide accountability.

Regular Follow-ups: Scheduled follow-up appointments allow healthcare providers to monitor patients' adherence and address any concerns or barriers they may face. This ongoing communication fosters a therapeutic alliance and encourages patient engagement.

Better medication adherence is essential for improving health outcomes and reducing healthcare costs. By understanding the importance of adherence and implementing effective strategies, healthcare providers can significantly enhance patient care. Addressing the barriers to adherence, particularly in underserved populations, is crucial for achieving health equity. Ultimately, fostering a culture of adherence not only benefits individual patients but also strengthens the overall healthcare system.

Methodology:

To analyze the topic of medication adherence and health outcomes, a comprehensive literature review was conducted. Relevant studies, research articles, and reviews published between 2015 and 2017 were identified through databases such as PubMed, Google Scholar, and academic journals. The search terms included "medication adherence," "health outcomes," "barriers," and "strategies." The selected literature was critically analyzed to identify key findings and insights related to medication adherence and its impact on health.

Findings:

The literature review revealed several key findings regarding medication adherence and health outcomes in 2017:

1. **Barriers to Medication Adherence:** Numerous factors contribute to poor medication adherence, including forgetfulness, complexity of medication regimens, financial constraints, lack of education about medications, side effects, and stigma associated with taking medications.
2. **Impact of Poor Adherence on Health:** Non-adherence to medications has been linked to increased hospitalizations, disease progression, treatment failures, and higher mortality rates. Patients who do not adhere to their prescribed medication regimens are at greater risk of complications and poorer health outcomes.
3. **Strategies to Enhance Adherence:** Various interventions have been proposed to improve medication adherence, such as patient education, simplification of medication regimens, reminder systems, financial assistance programs, and personalized care plans. These strategies aim to address the root causes of non-adherence and support patients in managing their medications effectively.

Limitations and Recommendations:

Despite the significance of medication adherence for improved health outcomes, several limitations exist in addressing this issue. Some patients may face socio-economic barriers that impede their ability to adhere to medications, while others may lack access to healthcare services or resources. Healthcare providers may also encounter challenges in identifying non-adherent patients and implementing effective interventions. To overcome these limitations, it is essential to adopt a multi-faceted approach that addresses the individual needs and preferences of patients. Healthcare systems should prioritize patient-centered care, facilitate communication between providers and patients, and utilize technological innovations to support medication adherence. Furthermore, policy changes and public health initiatives can promote awareness about the importance of medication adherence and provide resources to help patients overcome barriers.

Discussion:

The findings of this study underscore the critical role of medication adherence in achieving positive health outcomes. By improving adherence to medications, healthcare providers can enhance treatment effectiveness, reduce healthcare costs, and improve patients' quality of life. However, addressing medication non-adherence requires a collaborative effort between patients, healthcare providers, policymakers, and other stakeholders. It is crucial to recognize the unique challenges that each patient faces and tailor interventions to meet their specific needs. Healthcare systems should prioritize patient education, communication, and support to empower patients to manage their medications effectively. By implementing evidence-based strategies and leveraging innovative technologies, healthcare providers can promote better medication adherence and ultimately improve health outcomes for patients.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, medication adherence is a vital aspect of health management that plays a significant role in determining health outcomes. In 2017, despite ongoing efforts to address medication non-adherence, many patients continued to struggle with taking their medications as prescribed. To improve medication adherence and enhance health outcomes, it is essential to identify and address the barriers that prevent patients from adhering to their medications. By implementing patient-centered strategies, fostering communication between patients and providers, and leveraging technology to support medication management, healthcare systems can promote better adherence and ultimately improve the health of individuals. As we look towards the future, it is imperative to prioritize medication adherence as a key component of comprehensive healthcare and work towards creating a healthcare system that empowers patients to take control of their health.

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