

Closing the Patient Adherence Gap



Interactive adherence programs delivered through the retail pharmacy close the gap between the patient and the manufacturer – and build patient confidence along the way. The next generation of adherence will be programs that start in the pharmacy and continue at home.

BY KATHLEEN BONETTI AND BILL LIEBMAN

Patient non-adherence has plagued medical staff, pharmacists and the pharmaceutical community in general because there's never been an effective interactive approach to communicate with patients once they are at home and away from professional care. While pharmacists may have encouraged adherence with every prescription filled, there was little they could do once the patient left the store, until now. Along with advancements in technology has come a new generation of adherence programs and with it an interactive approach that addresses patient needs even among the myriad of distractions they face daily.

This new breed of adherence program has garnered impressive results and proven successful in tests at a major retailer within two therapeutic categories: GERD and Diabetes. These new programs engage patients at the outset of treatment and deliver access to qualified educational information and more. Within two weeks of initially filling a prescription, patients receive a mailing from their pharmacy that centers around a digital component that can help answer questions, minimize complications through education and get their treatment off to a smooth start.

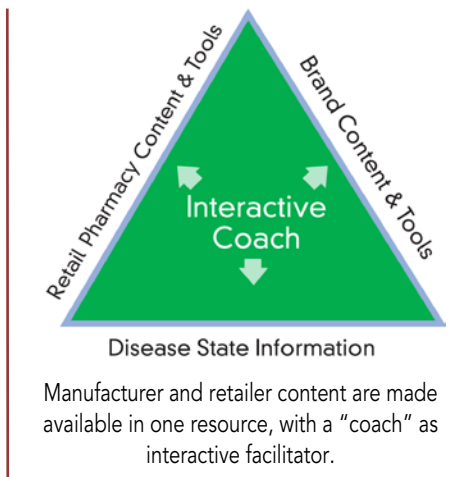
They are guided through the materials by an interactive coach that understands their diagnosis because he or she has a similar condition or treatment regimen. This helps to bring the materials to life in a way that is relatable to the patient and puts them at ease. Additionally, they are informed of retailer tools, as well as the resources and properties that manufacturers bring to the equation. (See Figure 1.) It's important for them to see the support of the pharmacy early on, as patients tend to view retail pharmacies as true point-of-care healthcare destinations. Plus, nearly all Americans live within just a few miles of a pharmacy, and this proximity to home makes it a trusted community partner.

It's important to develop and deliver messages and incentives at an intervention point when they can have the greatest impact. For many brands, that time is early in the treatment continuum:

- The first 30-day window is critical since it is during this time that habits about medication are initially formed and solidified.

- Patients with new prescriptions are at greater risk for non-adherence because they're not accustomed to the routine of taking medication.
- A five-minute conversation with your physician when first being diagnosed and prescribed isn't enough to learn anything significant about your medication, let alone form long-term habits.

Figure 1: Inform with Interactive Tools



The communication materials that are mailed to patients as a part of the adherence program include digital devices that inform patients of online resources designed to help them successfully navigate their therapy and condition. Much of the information they receive is particularly important for conditions with clear lifestyle considerations, such as diabetes, but all of the information is relevant to their diagnosis. The information includes:

- Diet and exercise tips
- Advice regarding lifestyle changes
- Disease education
- Links to retailers' refill and reminder programs
- Medication information

New adherence programs strive to engage patients, help them to make better health decisions and reinforce their commitment to therapy. Through an integrated approach, the patient gets the support he/she needs to move forward as an advocate in their healthcare journey. Additionally, it begins a dialogue between the patient and the pharmacist that helps them to see the benefit of adherence and its importance to overall health. (See Figure 2.)

Figure 2: Use an Integrated Approach to Engage Patients

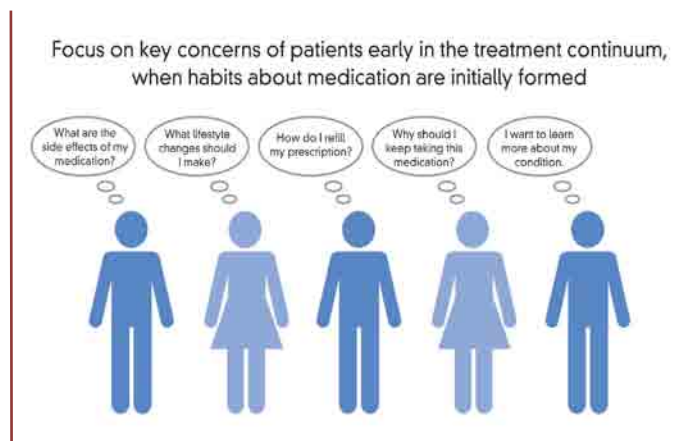


It is a well-known fact that patients who adhere to their medications have better health outcomes and require less care than those with similar conditions and poor adherence. The problem is that the majority of patients who don't adhere do so because they don't fundamentally believe that their medication will help them to live a better life. Through targeted communications and digital materials sent to them at the outset of therapy, the program helps them to understand the reasons why they should take their medication and answers important questions. (See Figure 3.)

Another benefit of digital materials within an adherence program is that information is easy to understand, tools and resources are organized in a rational progression and communication is simple so that patients can easily make sense of it. Interactive tools also take advantage of multisensory learning patterns, enabling more patients to benefit from the content. (See Figure 4.) Materials strive to:

- Distill pull-through messages and deliver just the "adherence" side.

Figure 3: Understand Patient Concerns



Pilot Programs

What were the results and key discoveries of integrated adherence solutions?

Patient Interaction with Materials:

- 1) Personally-directed information sent from the pharmacy has credibility – “the pharmacist sent me a letter and these materials. I think I’ll take a look at them.”
- 2) People want to engage with interactive content. If created with the patients’ concerns and questions in mind, the content can be not only educational, but inspiring.
- 3) Something physical/tangible accompanying the letter, like a CD, elicits a better response than the alternative paper delivery, with 20 percent of patients choosing to use it.
- 4) This type of program has a proven impact on patient behavior.

Quantitative Measurement:

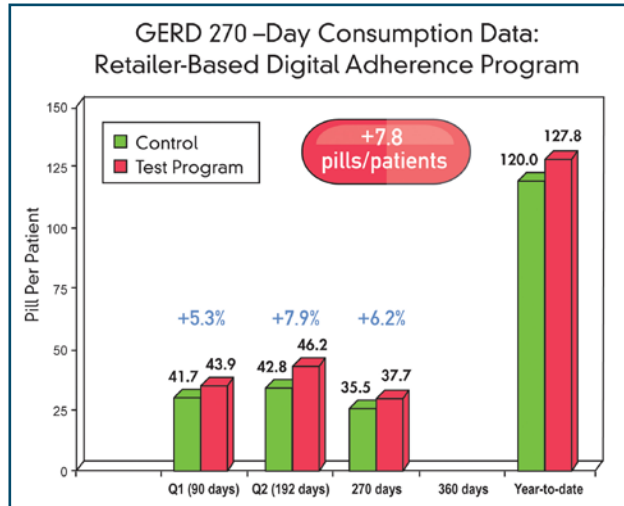
A patient adherence effort by its very nature should be analyzed over a period of time to determine if it is having an impact long-term and is preventing or minimizing the “drop-offs” that frequently occur once a patient has started a treatment regimen. For this test effort, measurement and testing took place at 90-day intervals and involved the evaluation of:

- 1) **Compliance rate** – Total outcome (pills) per patient; measured for every individual patient on a time-aligned basis.
- 2) **Compliance treatment effect** –
 - a) The difference in rates between the intervention (program) and control groups.
 - b) The total treatment effect since the inception of the program.
- 3) **Persistence** – Percent of patients that are persistent at points in time after the program’s inception test vs. control.

Program Results:

- Treatment groups showed an increase of **7.8** pills per patient = 8 days of incremental therapy (See Figure A.)
- On a 10,000 patient mailing, the number of persistent patients increased by **550** (10.1 percent) for Metformin after 6 months and **190** (4.3 percent) for GERD product at 9 months (See Figure B.)
- Generated positive **ROI**: range 6:1 – 10:1

Figure A



Companies looking to establish or further establish their relationship with their patients will find it beneficial to offer value beyond the product and provide sophisticated and tailored resources to help patients better manage their health. Although digital adherence programs linked to a retail platform are relatively new on the scene, they are sure to be incorporated into more and more pharmaceutical marketing, considering their level of success and proven results. Combining digital technology with a tangible marketing tool helps pharmaceutical marketers get closer to the patient and has a powerful impact on levels of adherence and patient outcomes.

Figure B

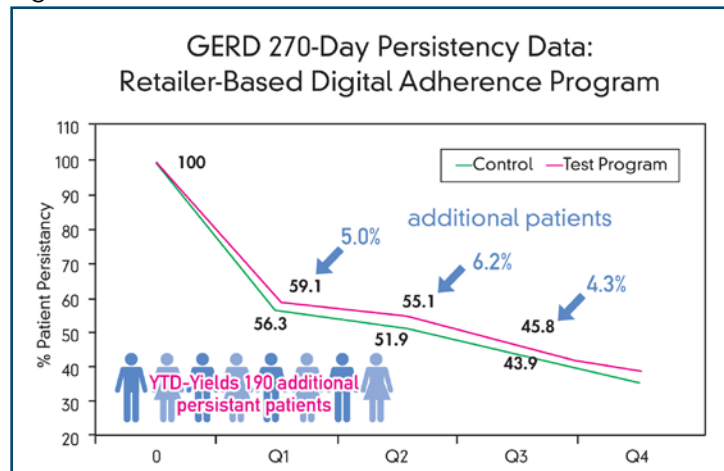
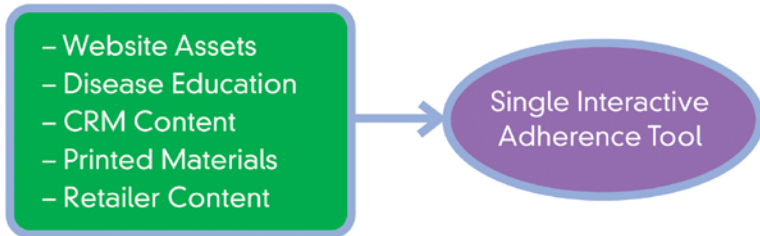


Figure 4: Capitalize on Multisensory Learning

Branded and unbranded content can be distilled into an adherence-focused, interactive patient experience



- Identify the relevant things that patients need to know, and focus only on that content.
- Branded and unbranded content can be delivered in a single format for adherence purposes.

Role of the retail pharmacy

Adherence programs administered through the retail pharmacy close the gap between the patient and the manufacturer and build patient confidence along the way. Pharmacies are a key point of care and leveraging their assets and resources is an effective platform.

- Pharmacies have a vital role in healthcare delivery.
- They can positively impact the lives of patients on a daily basis.
- Pharmacy, as a health care information resource, has an important place in the community.
- Pharmacists supply, and are knowledgeable on, the whole spectrum of medicine.

With the retail pharmacy as a trusted provider platform, patients are confident that the information they receive is credible and they are motivated to take action. Combining online technology with a tangible marketing tool helps pharmaceutical marketers get closer to the patient and has a powerful impact on levels of adherence. **DTC**

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