



The Two 'C's' in Healthcare

By Lynn Harrelson, R.Ph., FASCP
Senior Pharmacy Solutions
Medication Therapy Management Services
www.SeniorPharmacySolutions.com

Getting the most from your healthcare dollar is even more important in today's economy. Your investment in time, money, and energy to arrange travel and to complete your visits with your healthcare providers can really add up over the span of a very short time. I hear from many patients that sometimes they just feel overwhelmed with the costs of their healthcare. Especially when they compare their results with what they consider they have invested.

It can be overwhelming at times to arrange for your appointments, transportation, and someone to go with you if that is needed. Waiting to see your healthcare provider, waiting to get a new test approved, scheduling follow-up tests, waiting for your prescriptions to be filled, waiting for the your prescription drug plan to approve a new medication. Sometimes when we look back at our healthcare experience, we may feel as if all we have done is spent a great deal of time, money and energy in taking care of our health. I would agree with everyone who feels that way.

Getting the healthcare that you need can be very complicated. Sometimes it can take you to the brink of exacerbation, when you think that it can't get more complicated, it does. When you think that you can't do anything more to make a difference in your health and healthcare, I am going to ask you to consider two things that can have a tremendous impact on your health and the healthcare you receive. Two simple 'C's'...compliance and communication.

When I work with my patients, one of the biggest challenges and problems we address is compliance. Compliance, is taking your medications as prescribed by your healthcare provider. Sounds simple and it can be if you visit only one or two prescribers, and take only a few meds that seldom change. The majority of time, seniors see a multitude of prescribers and at times may be advised verbally to make changes in their medications. Sometimes these verbal communications can get lost in the translation or orders and instructions confused. My advice to all patients is to ask your prescriber to give the new instructions on paper.

However, you should always carry a small notebook for medical notes. When you visit your doctor and given information, make quick notes. Be sure to follow up and take the medication as prescribed.

All medications should be taken as prescribed. That's correct, should. In reality, we know that the majority of medications are not taken as they are ordered.... for a multitude of reasons. The most popular reason is side effects or how they make you feel. Many patients just quit taking their medication until the next time they visit their healthcare provider. Sometimes they don't even tell the prescriber that they are not taking their new medication or that they take it only every 2-3days, the problem here is the Communication. This can result in you getting another new prescription with even more side effects that may continue to cause you problems.

Patients just don't tell their prescribers that they are not compliant with the prescription order.....not taking the medication as it was ordered. Patients don't share with the prescriber or their pharmacist that they are having side effects, either of whom may have advice to correct their side effects. Patients don't tell their prescriber they have difficulty in affording a new medication, or didn't get it filled, or didn't pick it up or didn't take any doses because of the cost. Many will never ask if samples may be available or if the prescriber has a courtesy card that results in a discount or free starter prescription. Prescribers are aware of the difficulties that many have today in affording expensive medications. They are supportive in assisting patients get their medications. Your healthcare providers can't help with medications unless you communicate with them that there is a problem with your medications.

So, you get your medication, read the instructions, read all the extra labels that tell you additional information and you have questions. As I mentioned above, you have spent lots of time, energy and money getting that prescription. It would be the easy thing to do, to just worry about it later and not communicate to your pharmacist that you have questions. Patients need to better appreciate and understand that all their time, all their energy, all their resources are wasted if their efforts resulted is a new prescription that is not taken properly.

Please communicate with all you healthcare providers and try to be complaint and always take you medication as ordered. If that is not possible, please communicate with your healthcare providers so that they can support your ongoing healthcare.

The two 'C's', compliance and communication, taking your medications as ordered or talking about the use of your medications to your healthcare providers will make a big difference in your health.