



MEDICATION COMPLIANCE



Improving Antidepressant Compliance

The World Health Organization reports that depression is the leading cause of disability worldwide and is a major contributor to the overall global burden of disease.

Many patients do not fully understand depression or the medication prescribed to treat it. This can affect their adherence to their medication and negatively impact their treatment progress. It is critical that patients follow medication instructions set forth by their provider to ensure the best outcomes.

How can you improve medication compliance?

- When speaking with patients, refer to depression as a medical condition. Depression often carries a stigma and may be viewed as a moral weakness or character flaw.
- Discuss the chemical basis for depression. Explain that depression goes beyond simply feeling sad.
- Reinforce that depression is treatable, and discuss an appropriate duration of treatment.
- Discuss efficacy of medications and side effects. Assure the patient that if the initial choice proves intolerable, changes in medication can be made.
- Remind patients of the delayed therapeutic effects of antidepressants, as they may stop taking their medication if they do not notice immediate changes.
- Review most common adverse effects. Reassure patients that, over time, adverse effects lessen, and most patients do not have to stop therapy because of them.
- Enhance communication -- encourage your patients to discuss compliance issues, concerns and potential barriers to adherence. Discuss solutions.
- Involve all of the patient's health care providers.
- Provide oral and written instructions.
- Suggest the use of practical medication reminders (e.g., calendars, dose counters).
- Assess medication compliance at each patient visit.
- Recognize that not every strategy works in all patients. Develop a multicomponent approach (e.g., cognitive and behavioral).
- Follow up with patients one month after starting antidepressants to discuss efficacy and side effects.

Note: Additional barriers to compliance to antidepressant therapy relate to the nature of the disease itself and include problems with memory, concentration, hopelessness and a focus on somatic symptoms that can interfere with the patient's involvement in therapy. Treatment takes time.

For more information on CareSource behavioral health services and resources, contact Provider Services at **1-855-202-1058**, or visit our website at www.caresource.com/providers/education/patient-care/behavioral-health/.