

# Chemotherapy Oral Adherence

Judy Phillips, DNP, FNP-BC, AOCN

Family Nurse Practitioner

Cancer Care of Western North Carolina, USA

Assistant Professor

Lenoir Rhyne University, Hickory, North Carolina

# Nurses Are Vital to Improved Patient Outcomes

- Educating the patients!!!
- Patients learn best with nursing education.

# Vital Findings in the Evidence: How to Improve Compliance

- For a nurse to ask: “Are you remembering to take the medication?”
- For a phone call to be made to the patient within 2 weeks of starting the new drug.
- Most Important thing: Patients understand the importance of the drug.
- Complex regimens: Spread sheet

# Important Evidence Regarding Oral Adherence Success

- Can the patient/family read the medication bottle?
- Drug Boxes
- Medication Diaries
- Who is dispensing the drugs at home?
- Financial Issues: Is cost an issue?
- Nurses to ask: "Are you remembering to take your medication."
- Reminder prompts are good such as: alarms on phones/oven/clocks/text messages.
- Clear Communication is absolute.
- Booklets, handouts, and/or taped recordings are excellent during the teaching sessions.

# Nursing Pointers for improved oral medication adherence.

- Side Effect Control
- If a patient BELIEVES they can control the events in their life they have a better adherence to a medical regimen.
- Important for staff to assess the patients status at each lab/clinic visit. This includes how their medications are going and if there are any social issues.
- Patients' participation in the treatment decision is key, along with education.
- Patients need to VALUE WHY this medication is necessary.
- Collaborative Dialogue with oncology nurses is imperative.

# Social issues do have an affect.

- If a patient is having social or economical issues this makes them at a higher risk for poor compliance.
- Does the patient live alone?
- Is there a family member that would be helpful when giving new information?
- Does this person have other co-morbidities that require medicine? If so, then it is important to remember the greater the medication complexity, the less likely the older adults adhere to the medication regimen.
- Older age > 65 decreased compliance.

# Quality of Life

- If socioeconomic status is low then they could use a call every 2 weeks.
- If the patients Quality of Life is low, they need nursing calls every 2 weeks.

# Safety Issues

- **Nurses should go over: storage, disposal, safe handling, (gloves, wash hands, protecting patient/caregivers and environment).**
- **Do not crush or open pills, capsules because of risk of inhalation of dust particles form the medications.**
- **Does the patient/family understand the directions for taking the medications?**
- **Do they understand the drug bottle directions?**
- **Safe Sex.**



## **Key Assessment Questions:**

**What have you been told about this treatment plan with oral medications?**

**What other medications or pills do you take by mouth?**

**Are you able to swallow pills or tablets? If no, explain.**

**Are you able to read the drug label/information?**

**Are you able to open your other medicine bottles or packages?**

**Have you taken other pills for your cancer?**

**Are you experiencing any symptoms with that would affect your ability to keep down the pills, for example nausea or vomiting?**

**How will you fill your prescription?**

**Have you had any problems with your insurance that has interfered with our obtaining your medications?**

**Who should we call with questions? Name and phone number.**

## **Patient Education:**

**Inform any other doctors, dentists or healthcare providers that you are taking pills/tablets for your cancer.**

**Keep the pills/tablets away from children and pets and in a child proof container.**

**Keep the pills/tablets in the original container, unless otherwise directed. It could be dangerous to mix with other pills.**

**Wash your hands before and after handling the pills/tablets.**

**Do not crush, chew, cut or disrupt your pills/tablets unless directed otherwise.**

**Store your pills/tablets away from heat, sunlight, or moisture as it may degrade the pills/tablets, potentially making them less effective.**

**Have a system to make sure you take your pills /tablets correctly.**

**Make sure you have directions about what to do if you miss a dose.**

**If you accidentally take too many pills or if someone else takes your pills/tablets call the Doctor or Nurse Immediately.**

**Ask your nurse what to do with any pills/tablets you have not taken or are outdated.**

**Carry with you a list of medicines that you are taking, including your cancer pills/tablets.**

**Let us know if you have a problem with paying for or getting your pills.**

**Plan ahead for travel, refills and weekends.**



