

A HEALTHY VISION

How Independent Health is Leading the Way

PAWNY Partners with Independent Health to Improve Medication Adherence and Patient Outcomes

Overview

It's estimated 50 to 75 percent of patients don't take their prescription medications as directed by their doctor. The American Heart Association reports medication nonadherence takes the lives of 125,000 Americans annually and costs the U.S. health care system nearly \$300 billion per year in unnecessary expenses.

In an effort to address this issue locally, Independent Health and the Pharmacists' Association of Western New York (PAWNY) have partnered on a unique education project. The goal is to help educate patients, in particular seniors and those living with chronic medical conditions, on the importance of adhering to their medication regimen with respect to timing, dosage and frequency.

PAWNY is an organization of community-based pharmacists and associated health care professionals dedicated to the advancement of the profession of pharmacy through appropriate and cost-effective care.

Dennis C. Galluzzo, R.Ph., executive director of PAWNY and owner/operator of Family Medical Pharmacy in Williamsville, said about 25 independent pharmacies throughout the eight counties of Western New York have participated in the medication adherence program since it was first launched in October 2015.

"Using data provided by Independent Health, the participating pharmacists contact patients who appeared to be non-adherent to their medications to learn why they weren't taking their medication properly," said Galluzzo.

Results

As of the end of 2017, the participating pharmacies have conducted more than 2,000 medication adherence interventions with patients. According to Galluzzo, these interventions have provided pharmacists with the

CASE STUDY

Since October 2015, Independent Health and PAWNY have partnered on a unique project to help educate patients on the importance of adhering to their medication regimen with respect to timing, dosage and frequency.

Results of this program include:

- More than 2,000 patient interventions conducted.
- 55.4 percent of interventions related to medication nonadherence resulted in improved adherence.

opportunity to switch some patients to a different medication if their current prescription is causing side effects, move others to a 90-day supply or recommend tablet splitting for potential cost savings. All patients are encouraged to consult with their doctor for further assistance.

- Overall, 1,555 of the interventions were specifically related to medication nonadherence, with 862 (55.4 percent) resulting in improved adherence.
- Another 505 interventions focused on moving patients to either tablet splitting or a lower-cost generic medication. As a result, 213 patients (42.2 percent) were able to reduce their prescription drug costs, which in turn can lead to better adherence.

"Our patients have benefitted greatly from this effort," said Galluzzo. "In addition to being further educated on their prescriptions, they have been made aware of the medications that might cause them to become more sensitive to side effects and toxicities."

Pharmacists can play a key role in helping patients overcome barriers to effectively and consistently follow medication regimens. A 2013 study conducted by the National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA) called "Medication Adherence in America – A National Report Card" found the biggest predictor of medication adherence was a patient's personal connection with a pharmacist or pharmacy staff.

Martin Burruano, R.Ph., vice president of pharmacy services at Independent Health, said the health plan has long been interested in finding a way to partner with PAWNY to improve the health of the community and utilize a resource such as pharmacists to help its members lead healthier lives.

"Community pharmacists have a trusted relationship with their patients," said Burruano. "The patients know them and enjoy seeing them. That gives the pharmacist the opportunity to really engage with those patients."

Expanding Program Objectives

As a result of the medication adherence program's success, PAWNY and Independent Health have expanded their outreach efforts over the past two years.

- In 2016, PAWNY helped Independent Health Medicare Advantage plan members who are taking medications that are considered high risk to switch to a safer alternative.
 - Over a three-month period, PAWNY pharmacists helped move 73 patients to a safer drug.
- In 2017, the two organizations unveiled a six-month intervention program targeting patients who have been prescribed diabetes medications. In addition to improved adherence, this initiative focused on helping these patients lower their hemoglobin A1c count, as well as educating them about the important role statins play in controlling diabetes and high cholesterol.
 - Of the more than 200 interventions performed, 25.4 percent resulted in positive outcomes.

Looking Ahead

Improving overall medication adherence, while continuing to help patients with diabetes, are PAWNY and Independent Health's main objectives for 2018. The two sides are also looking to offer similar interventions to patients with other chronic conditions in the near future.

"Through our partnership, PAWNY and Independent Health will continue to develop pharmacy programs that can document improved, measurable patient health outcomes and lower overall health care costs, while improving the wellness of those we serve," said Burruano.

To learn more about Independent Health and PAWNY's partnership and the origins behind the medication adherence program, visit www.independenthealth.com/ihpawny.

