



How Adherent Is Your Marketing?

by Liz Tiefenthaler

Adherence is certainly the new buzz word in health care, and for good reason. Studies show the staggering health care costs of patients who are not adherent with their medications. Recent changes in reimbursements to hospitals based on re-admittance are costly. Plus, we know there are better patient outcomes when people are adherent with their medications. The lesson we've learned is that a large percentage of patients need additional help in taking their medications at the correct time, with the right method, and using the proper dose. This has also focused more attention on pharmacists and their role in patient outcomes.

Starting with medication synchronization programs, pharmacy adherence initiatives have expanded to include transitional and in-home care. These are definitely new focus areas for pharmacies hoping to expand into what can be lucrative offerings. Jennifer and Michael Shannon, owners of Lily's Pharmacy in Johns Creek, Ga., have expanded their traditional pharmacy offerings to include a comprehensive hospital transition of care program. Working closely with doctors and nurses at a local hospital, Lily's offers post-discharge care that includes one-on-one help with medications and 24/7 pharmacist access. Testimonials from patients and better outcomes for the hospital are a testament to this innovative adherence program.

I have also been hearing from more pharmacists who are adding nurses and dieticians to their staff. The number of pharmacists offering advice on vitamins and supplements as a way to combat side effects from medications and improve adherence is also on the rise.

PROMOTING YOUR SERVICES

It is all well and good to have these amazing programs in place in your pharmacy, but what are you doing to make

sure people know they are available? In other words, is your marketing "adherent?" Do you have a strategy in place built around a target group who would like to take advantage of your offerings? Are you consistently getting your message to this target group and then, are you measuring your response? Just as sticking with a medication plan improves health outcomes, so having a marketing plan and following it will help with a healthier bottom line.

What sort of marketing strategies work with adherence? I have talked in the past about the importance of doctor detailing in a comprehensive marketing plan. For those of you with a robust sync program, you have compelling data to present to prescribers about why it is better for the patient and the practice to have you involved in their patient's care. Moose Pharmacy in North Carolina can count the large number of new patients they are seeing as a result of sharing adherence data with physicians.

A transition of care program such as Lily's Pharmacy does not just happen by chance. It takes getting out there, meeting with the right people, and selling your services. I know this can be uncomfortable for some of you, and might be outside the scope of what school may have prepared you to do, but if you arm yourself with well-designed materials and a good story, you will be successful.

Set up your marketing plan. What will you need to do to reach your business goals? Then, organize a calendar of what you will do and when and remember—be adherent! ■

Liz Tiefenthaler is the president of Pharm Fresh Media, a full-service marketing company focused on helping independent pharmacies gain new customers and build loyalty with their current customers. She can be reached at liz@pharmfreshmedia.com.