September - Tips for Improving Adherence

“Drugs don’t work in patients who don’t take them” – C Everett Koop, MD, Former US Surgeon General

Adherence to treatment is an important factor in monitoring and improving IBD disease course. Adherence has 2 components: consumption (use) and time (persistence). Adherence is the preferred term over compliance, as compliance connotes patient obedience and blame, and is paternalistic. Adherence to medications in IBD is approximately 50%, and non-adherence is associated with more flares, hospitalizations, higher medical costs.


Adherence in IBD is complex and multifactorial, but can be broken down into treatment-related, patient-related or illness related factors.

Treatment-related:
- Dosage/dosing regimen
- Convenience
- Formulation
- Cost/reimbursement
- Adverse effects
- Effectiveness

Illness-related:
- Severity, extent, duration of disease
- Frequency and intensity of flare-ups
- Complications

Patient-related:
- Skills/knowledge to follow regimen
- Belief systems/insights
- Psychiatric disorders
- Male gender, non-married

TIP #2: Determine the reason for non-adherence (Herman & Kane, 2015)

Is the non-adherent behavior accidental or intentional?

- **Accidental** non-adherence may be most effectively addressed by practical behavioral strategies such as:
  - Simplify the regimen - take medications at the same time every day and in a single dose when possible
  - Visual cues - put medication near the toothbrush, place a sticky note on the medication, use a weekly medication dispenser, and/or set a phone alert
  - Set a reminder to get new prescriptions when visiting provider, and renew medications before they run out
  - Involve family and significant others in remembering medications
  - Download apps on smart phones that help patients adhere with a medication regimen

- **Intentional** non-adherence may be most effectively addressed by reinforcing and/or increasing the patient’s understanding of issues related to adherence and the effects of non-adherence.

TIP #3: How to assess adherence (Greenly, Kunz, Walter, & Hommel, 2013)

There are a few ways to measure adherence:

1. Direct patient inquiry
1. Don’t ask if they have been taking their medication. Rather, state “many patients forget to take their medications at times. Has this been an issue for you?” And if yes, ask how often. Question # flares during interval last seen, and any symptoms next, to associate medication adherence with symptoms/flares.

2. Use of adherence scales
   a. Modified Morisky Adherence Scale (MMAS-8): this is the only scale validated in IBD, and the most widely used adherence scale (Trindale, Ehrlich, Kornbluth & Ulman, 2011).

3. Pill counts
4. Pharmacy fill data
5. Electronic monitoring (pill caps)

TIP #4: Strategies for improving adherence (Haynes et al, 2008; Kane, 2006; Lopez-Sanroman & Bermejo, 2006; Traynor, 2005)
   • Evaluate adherence as a vital sign, at every visit
   • Ask if they ever miss a dose when doing med rec
   • Educate on why medications are important (decreased risk of progression and flare ups) and how the medications work
   • Simplify their regimen
   • Discuss reminder systems
   • Involve family/others
   • Explain the association of adherence and reduced risk of flares, better quality of life
   • Facilitate shared-decision making and mutual goal setting

TIP #5: Promoting alliance not compliance: Communication strategies (Dudley-Brown, 2008)
   • Use of a patient-centered approach is associated with better adherence, satisfaction, and illness adjustment
   • Consider the use of a therapeutic alliance, a “we” rather than “me” approach to chronic illness
   • Consider the use of motivational interviewing techniques

TIP #6: Share some apps that patients can utilize for medication reminders
   • Medisafe sends reminders through automated phone calls and text messages: https://medisafe.com
   • Dosecast has a variety of smart scheduling features: www.dosecast.com
   • Medhelper Pill Reminder has similar functions as dosecast but contains exportable reports: medhelperapp.com
   • My Pillbox: monitors adherence through an analytics dashboard: pillboxok.com

References


