

Quality Improvement Report

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Department of Public Health & Human Services

Tips for Helping Patients Stick with Their Medications

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It has been well established in the literature that among patients with chronic illness, approximately 50% do not take medications as prescribed and that rates of medication adherence drop after the first six months of starting treatment. Adherence is a key factor associated with the effectiveness of all pharmacological therapies, but is particularly critical for medications prescribed for chronic conditions like diabetes.

Medication-taking behavior is extremely complex, but it is clear that medication adherence is not exclusively the responsibility of the patient. Ironically, to improve adherence among patients with diabetes, we as health care professionals should first abandon the concept of trying to get patients to comply or adhere better. Instead we need to embrace a new collaborative relationship with patients: one where providers set goals with their patients and provide ongoing support for optimal patient self-management behaviors over time.

The purpose of this article is to provide practical tips on how providers and pharmacists can work together in helping patients take their medications. Pharmacists are well-positioned to help tackle several non-adherence problems, because of their accessibility and medication expertise,

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References

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3. Delamater AM. Improving Patient Adherence. *Clinical Diabetes* April 2006 24 (2): 71-77.
4. PL Detail-Document, Tips for Sticking With Your Meds. Pharmacist's Letter/Prescriber's Letter. November 2013.
5. PL Detail-Document, Medication Adherence Toolbox. Pharmacist's Letter/Prescriber's Letter. December 2013.
6. Type 2 Diabetes Exams and Tests. Retrieved March 12, 2014, from <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000313.htm>
7. Adult MEDucation: Improving Medication Adherence in Older Adults. Adherence Self Assessment Form. Retrieved March 12, 2014, from <http://adultmeducation.com/index.html>

Diabetes Care Indicators

Primary Care Practices and Diabetes Education Programs

Figure 1. Diabetes care indicators from primary care practices in Montana participating in the DQCMS, 3rd Quarter (July—Sept. 2014). N = 20 practices; 10,232 patients.

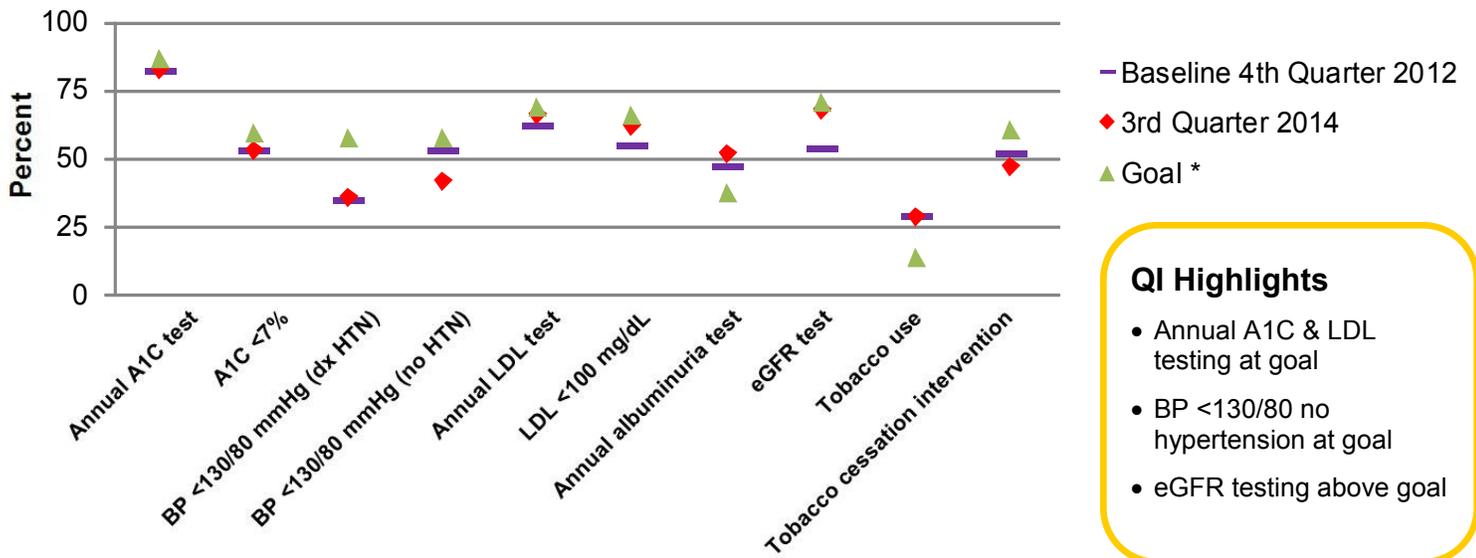
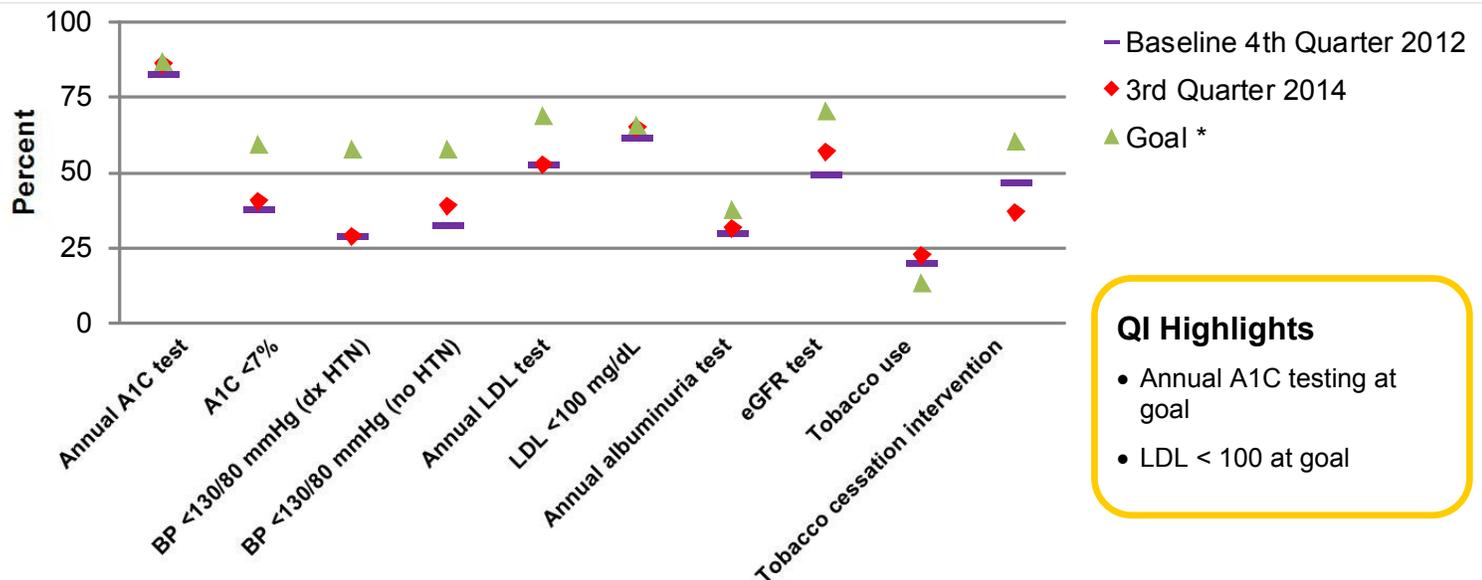


Figure 2. Diabetes care indicators from diabetes self-management education and support programs in Montana participating in the DQCMS, 3rd Quarter (July—Sept. 2014). N=5 programs; 1,349 patients.



DQCMS = Diabetes Quality Care Monitoring System. Data presented here are for adult patients with diabetes seen within the last year. Montana's statewide quality improvement goals for diabetes were updated in 2013 based upon Healthy People 2020 targets or a 10% improvement from baseline.

Tips for Helping Patients Stick with Their Medications

The highlighted items below are areas a pharmacist can help.

<p>Step 1: Identify and assess non-Adherence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Consider medication adherence as a “vital sign” to be checked at each patient interaction. ◆ Ask patients blame-free and open-ended questions (i.e. “I know it must be difficult to take all your medications regularly. How often do you miss taking them?”)
<p>Step 2: Help patients remember</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ *Minimize the number of medications a patient must take. Use combination products when appropriate. ◆ *Simplify dosing regimens by using once-daily drugs to minimize the impact of missed doses. ◆ Use available technology for dose reminders (see below for a list of smartphone options). ◆ *Have your patient employ medication synchronization with their pharmacy (synchronizing the filling of all chronic medications on the same day each month with one-on-one education). ◆ *Use pill boxes and calendars. ◆ Teach patients to relate pill taking to daily activities such as meals, bedtime, etc.
<p>Step 3: Address financial and physical barriers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ *Talk to your pharmacist to be familiar with local formularies and how to find free or low cost medications (i.e. generics, assistance programs, discount cards, etc.) ◆ *Help patients find devices that suit their physical limitations (i.e. inhalers, insulin pens, etc.)
<p>Step 4: Communicate and educate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Ask patients about their meds (i.e. do they work, do they think they are harmful, do they think they need to take them?) ◆ *Provide clear, written instructions that include the indication for medications. ◆ *Assess understanding of instructions asking them to repeat or “teach back” what you have told them.
<p>Step 5: Explain benefits and risks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Explain the benefits of adherence and how the medication addresses the condition or prevents complications. ◆ *Let patient know what to expect, such as when they could expect to see effects of their medications. ◆ *Discuss side effects in the context of medication benefits. Lists of side effects may cause anxiety. Give patients tips for managing and offer reassurance for side effects.
<p>Step 6: Get patients involved</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ *If possible, offer options to patients so they are involved in the decision-making process, such as preferred dosage form, dosing frequency, timing of administration, etc. ◆ *Tailor medication regimens to patients’ health care goals and life expectancy. ◆ *Use monitoring (i.e. blood pressure, lipid levels, HgbA1C, etc.) to motivate and educate

Report Highlights

- **Tips for Helping Patients Stick with their Medications**
- **Diabetes Care Indicators:**
 - **Primary Care Practices**
 - **Diabetes Education Programs**

Upcoming Events

Montana Diabetes Advisory Coalition Meetings for 2015

January 16, 2015

Sacajawea Hotel, Three Forks, MT

April 17, 2015

Hilton Garden Inn, Bozeman, MT

July 17, 2015

The Finlen Hotel, Butte, MT

18th Annual Montana Diabetes Professional Conference

October 22-23, 2015

Kalispell, MT

For more information on the above events, please contact Susan Day at (406) 444-6677

2015 Big Sky Pulmonary Conference

February 26-28, 2015

Fairmont Hot Springs Resort, Anaconda, MT

For more information, please visit

<http://www.umt.edu/sell/cps/bigskypulmonary/>

Phone Reminder Apps and Texts

The following apps were rated highest in a study conducted by pharmacists.

Medication adherence smartphone applications (apps) and alerts:

- **MyMedSchedule** (for iPhone and Android)
<http://www.mymedschedule.com/>
- **MyMeds** (for iPhone and Android)
<http://about.my-meds.com/>
- **RxmindME** (for iPhone)
<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/rxmindmeprescription-medicine/id379864173?mt=8>

Short Message Service (SMS) text messaging services:

- **OnTimeRx**
<http://www.ontimerx.com/reminders/services.html>
- **RememberItNow**
<http://rememberitnow.com/index.php>

Online Resources

www.diabetes.mt.gov

- Montana Diabetes Program State Plan 2009-2014
- Report on the Burden of Diabetes
- Archived Diabetes Quality Improvement Reports and Surveillance Reports from 1998 to present
- Resources for clinicians, diabetes educators, and schools

DQCMS Information

www.risprojects.org/dqcms

- User Manual
- Training Videos
- Helpful Hints
- Help Sheets