

# **CPC Healthcare Communications Whitepaper Series: Factors Affecting Patient Compliance**



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## The Non-Compliance Conundrum

Patient non-compliance is somewhat of a mystery among pharmaceutical manufacturers today, with the majority of them accepting the inevitable fact that a large percentage of their consumers will be non-compliant. These same manufacturers pour millions of dollars into research and development, and into launching a new prescription, but do little to ensure compliance. Rather, pharma sales personnel are required to provide healthcare professionals (HCPs) with clinical information about the efficacy of the pharma brands, and HCPs are, in turn, expected to “manage” their patients—the pharma consumers—and ensure optimal care. However, the issue of non-compliance continues to exist year after year.

Common in patients of all ages and across a wide range of diseases, non-compliance does not generally correlate with age, sex, socio-economic status or level of education. Table I<sup>1</sup> illustrates the extent of compliance with long-term therapy.

**Table I: Compliance with Long-Term Medication Regimes**

Treatment	Compliance Rate
Antibiotic treatment	33%
Treatment for hypertension (in general)	53%
Sleeping pills, sedatives	42%
Tranquilizers in schizophrenic outpatients	54%
Tuberculosis drugs	55%
Insulin injections (diabetes)	48%
Anti-asthmatic drugs	46%
Glaucoma eye drops	42%

Most likely, patient non-compliance continues to be an unsolved mystery due to its complex factors. Until those factors and the issue of non-compliance are addressed, pharma manufacturers, for the most part, cannot tap into the significant revenue opportunities that exist. Therefore, a full understanding of the factors that drive or influence non-compliant behaviour, is the starting point for positively impacting patient compliance and related sales revenue.

## What Factors Affect Compliance?

The primary factors affecting patient compliance fall into one of two groups, which are presented in Figures I and II:

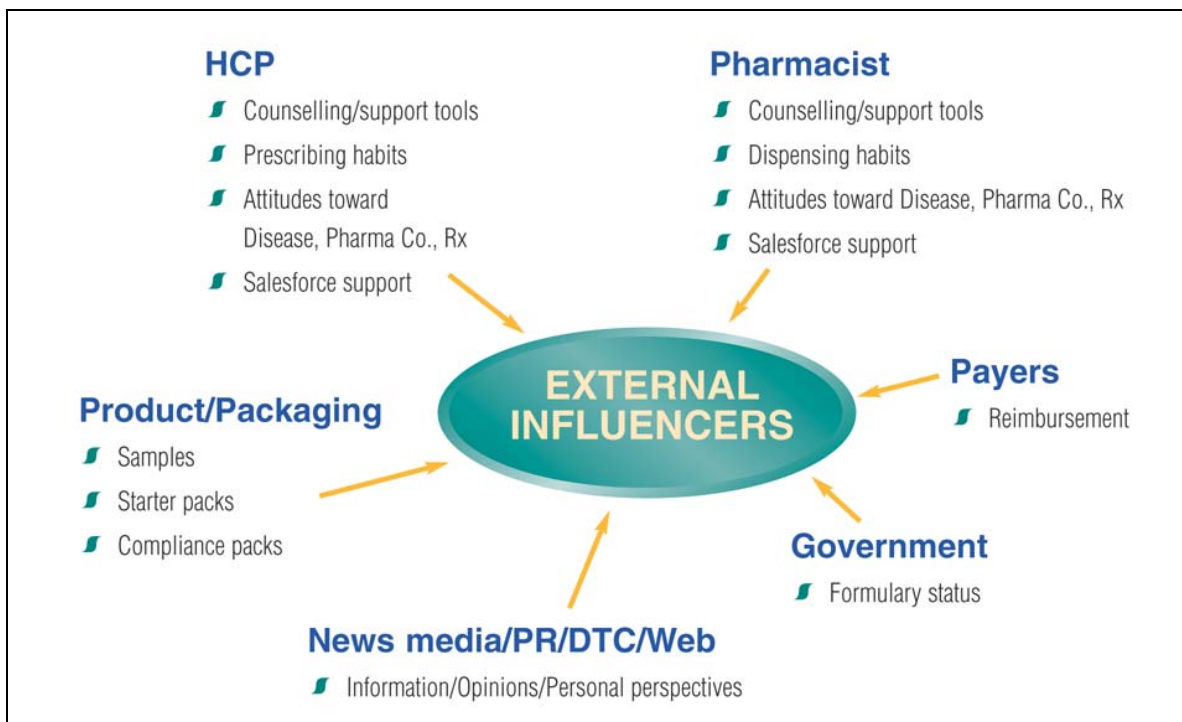
- 1) external influencers, or
- 2) patient experience.

External influencers are all of the factors outside of a patient's control that have the potential to impact compliance. All of the factors that contribute to a patient's experience using prescriptions are known as patient experience.

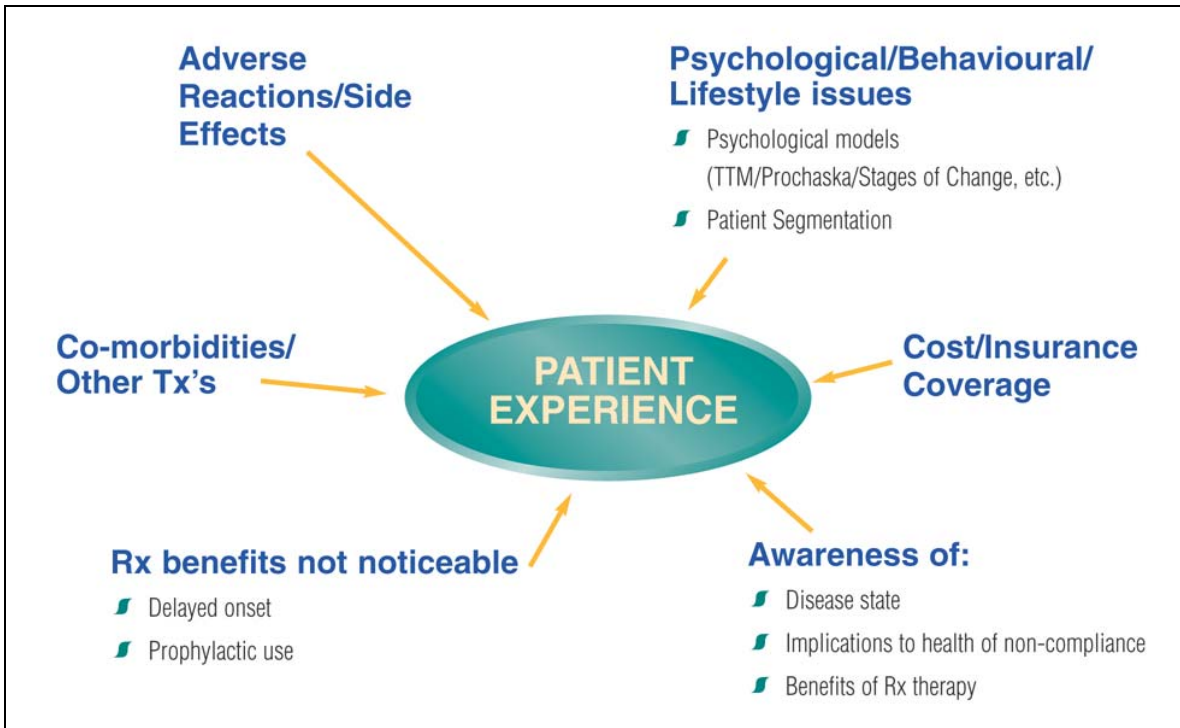
Each of the two factors must be thoroughly reviewed, researched and analysed in order to develop a solution that will be meaningful and sustainable for both the patients and the various external stakeholders.

However, simply knowing the factors is not enough. One needs to delve deeper into each factor and understand its role in impacting overall compliance. Through the development of a wide variety of programs, CPC has developed a series of questions. Before starting to create any patient compliance program, we review those questions. Their answers help form the strategic framework for the development of an effective program.

**Figure I: External Influencers**



**Figure II: Patient Experience**



**How Can We Determine Which Factors Are Most Important?**

Once all of the factors have been identified and evaluated, and all of the questions have been answered, the information needs to be prioritized. Ideally, patient research is conducted to help further evaluate the information. However, if either budget or time does not allow for research, then two types of information must be identified from the existing data: 1) the key factors and most importantly, 2) the factors that can be impacted.

In some cases, a relevant factor may exist but little to nothing can be done to address it. For example, although cost may be cited as a key factor, it may be impossible to do anything to actually offset that cost. Only those factors that cannot be addressed or that are negligible should be excluded from the development of a patient compliance program. All other factors must be included so that the eventual program provides a full spectrum of support for both the patient and the relevant stakeholders. (For additional information, see our white paper titled, "Using Psychological Models to Improve Patient Compliance.")

## **How Do We Identify and Then Address Factors Specific to Individual Patients?**

Conducting research is the only way to fully comprehend what factors affect different patients. Research is responsible for

- identifying the relevant importance of each factor as well as different patient segments.
- providing insight into which patient segments are most likely to be compliant or non-compliant.
- indicating which information is required to address potential compliance issues.

## **Can We Impact All Factors with One Program or Will We Need a Series of Initiatives?**

For the most part, one overall program can impact all relevant factors by being integrated with other brand communications, whether they are already in place or in development. Too often, compliance programs are developed as satellites, lacking the support of detail aids, advertising, etc. To be truly effective and have a long-term impact on all stakeholders, a compliance program must be presented as a critical component of the brand's overall marketing platform. Whether one program or a series of separate initiatives are created, the most critical aspect is to ensure that they are all integrated and support each other.

## **Now That We Have This Information How Do We Use It to Impact Compliance?**

Next, the details of your patient compliance program are fleshed out. All communications—whether print or electronic, personalized or interactive—may be tailored with traditional or new technology to address the needs of your individual patients. Your budget, overall objectives and return-on-investment expectations determine exactly which type of media should be used to develop the most appropriate type of patient compliance program.

## **References**

1. Levy R.A. Improving Compliance With Prescription Medications: An Important Strategy For Containing Health-Care Costs. *Medical Interface* 1989