AA·MDS INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION

Medication Adherence: Taking Your Meds as Directed

Taking medication correctly may seem like a simple or personal matter, but non-adherence, or not taking medication as directed, is a complicated and common problem. People do not realize the real damage or effects of non-adherence. When people with chronic conditions such as PNH do not take medication as directed, the repercussions can be severe. For instance, not taking your prescribed medication can lead to increased hemolysis and the need for blood transfusions.

Types of non-adherence

There are two types of non-adherence:

- **Intentional** – where the patient decides not to follow the treatment recommendations based on their beliefs and preferences.
- **Unintentional** – where the patient wants to follow the treatment recommendations but faces practical barriers such as forgetting to take medication regularly.

Why is medication adherence important?

Medication adherence is an important factor in ensuring the success of a treatment plan. Adherence to prescribed medications is associated with improved clinical outcomes for chronic disease management and reduced mortality from chronic conditions. By taking your prescribed medications as directed, you give the medication a fair shot to work. It also allows you and your doctor an accurate assessment of how well the treatment works. If you don't take your medication consistently and as directed, you won't know if the treatment is really working. PNH treatments need to be taken consistently for the best outcomes.

Reasons for non-adherence

Several factors contribute to medication non-adherence. You may experience practical barriers such as forgetfulness, complex medication regimens, or difficulty accessing medications. Your beliefs, attitudes, and misconceptions about medications can influence adherence. Fear of side effects, skepticism about the effectiveness of medications, and concerns about dependency are common barriers. Poor communication between you and your doctor can lead to confusion or lack of understanding regarding medication instructions. Identifying potential adherence factors upfront will allow you and doctor to address them effectively and work together as a team.

Tips for Improving medication adherence

Open Communication: Establish a strong rapport with your doctor. Ask questions, seek clarification about medications, and express any concerns or challenges you may have.

Medication Organization: Use pill organizers, reminder apps, or alarms to help you remember to take your medications at the prescribed times.

Medication Routine: Integrate your medication schedule into your daily routine. Take your medications at consistent times and associate them with daily activities to help create a habit.

Understand Instructions: Make sure you fully undertand the instructions for each medication, including dosage, frequency, and any special considerations. If anything is unclear, consult your healthcare provider or pharmacist.

Seek Support: Engage the support of family members, friends, or caregivers who can remind you to take your medications and provide assistance if needed.

Medication Refill Reminders: Set reminders for refilling your medications in advance to avoid running out of essential medications or set up automatic delivery of medications.

Simplify Regimen: If you find your medication regimen confusing or overwhelming, discuss with your doctor the possibility of simplifying it, such as switching medications, combining medications or adjusting dosing schedules.

Remember, medication adherence increases the likelihood of successful treatment outcomes, enhances symptom control, and reduces the risk of disease progression or complications. Patients who adhere to their medications can experience an improved quality of life, better management of chronic conditions, and increased confidence in their ability to self-manage their health.