

FACTS

A Tough Pill to Swallow:

Medication Adherence and Cardiovascular Disease

OVERVIEW

The statistics are startling, but as many as half of 187 million patients in the U.S. do not take their medications as prescribed¹ – meaning they do not follow the intensity of the drug regimen or continue to take their drugs through the duration of the prescription. There are a variety of potential reasons for this, including poor communications between healthcare providers and patient

medication adherence for this important patient group. Improving medication adherence, therefore, will require a multifaceted approach.

IMPACT OF MEDICATION NONADHERENCE

The prevalence of medication nonadherence is difficult to assess since no one measure captures the total picture. It is known, however, that when individuals do not take their medications as prescribed, they face greater health risks and

to their health. Nonadherent patients are more likely than their medication adherent counterparts to have adverse health events that incur additional costs to them and the health care system.⁴

Unfortunately, the problem of medication nonadherence is likely to grow, particularly as the population ages and more individuals are prescribed prescription drugs. Currently, approximately 90% of adults over the age of 65 take prescription drugs, with 65% taking three or more prescription drugs,⁵ and the number of older Americans is expected to double by 2040.⁶

The variety – and potential combination – of barriers that result in medication nonadherence mean no single solution will close the adherence gap. Additional research, education, and awareness on medication adherence can increase our understanding of best practices and interventions that ensure patients take their medicines as prescribed. But policy changes in Medicare, for example, could also help improve

