

Ascertaining Barriers for Compliance: policies for safe, effective and cost- effective use of medicines in Europe

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The ABC Project is the EU-funded research initiative to improve patient compliance to medication in Europe. The strategic goal of the project is to produce evidence-based policy recommendations for improving patient adherence, and thus raising the effectiveness of medications use by Europeans. The project's findings are expected to help health policymakers take right decisions to minimize the negative impact of non-adherence. ABC Project was launched on January 1, 2009 and will run until December 31, 2011. www.ABCproject.eu



It is summer in the ABC project... Overview of work progress and achievements

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Surrounded by a lot of green and exposed to a long-desired sun, the fourth ABC project consortium meeting was held in Leuven, Belgium on June 25 and 26, 2010. After 18 months of hard work, the ABC project entered its high-season and some snapshots of the project's accomplishments are worthwhile to showcase.

The important objective of the ABC project was to conduct a systematic review on the terminology currently used to refer to problems associated with medication related adherence. After meticulously scrutinizing the peer reviewed literature published in Medline, Embase, Cochrane, Psycinfo and Cinahl, it soon became clear that no common language exists to define the concept of adherence. Many of the currently existing definitions are vague and ambiguous, underscoring the apparent need for a new taxonomy that defines the concept of adherence in a clear-cut fashion. After several rounds of discussion and fine-tuning of definitions with the consortium partners and experts in the field, the taxonomy will soon be submitted for publication. If accepted, this new taxonomy will represent a conceptual blueprint to guide future adherence research.

Four other systematic reviews reached their cruise-control speed:

First, the project partners are conducting a review of reviews of the literature on determinants driving adherence behavior. Published systematic reviews or meta-analyses in specific illness populations are being used as the main source of information to identify the socio-demographic, treatment-related, condition-related, patient-related and healthcare system related factors that prevent patients from taking their medication as prescribed. Although this is work in progress, it became clear that the patient is still seen as the defaulter, and that factors related to the healthcare professionals or healthcare system are under-investigated.

Second, the ABC project would like to propose a conceptual model for the study of determinants of non-adherence in the future. While many psychological models have been proposed to investigate determinants of behaviour, such as the Health Belief Model or the Theory of Planned Behaviour, empirical evidence is needed to support the appropriateness of these models. Indeed, many adherence researchers advocate that a conceptual framework should form the basis for studies focusing on determinants, yet, proof that these models are indeed reflecting which and how determinants are influencing adherence behaviour is currently lacking. The consortium took up the challenge to summarize the empirical evidence supporting existing theories and will integrate this evidence into a

new empirically-based conceptual model that should underpin future studies investigating determinants of non-adherence at the patient level.

Third, many adherence researchers hit the wall when it comes to deriving efficacious interventions to improve medication adherence. Indeed, existing systematic reviews show that existing evidence on what works is limited, and that many studies are plagued by poor methodology. The goal of the third systematic review is to summarize the results of adherence-enhancing intervention studies that used electronic monitoring to measure medication adherence. Electronic monitoring monitors the date and timing of medication intake on a day to day basis and hence allows capturing the day-to-day variability in medication taking dynamics. Although currently no gold standard exists to assess medication adherence, electronic monitoring is considered the most detailed and valid measure available to date. By focusing on studies who used this more superior adherence assessment method only, this systematic review will be able to present which interventions are effective, and will also, by pointing towards the gaps in our current knowledge-base, identify a roadmap for future intervention studies.

Finally, the fourth systematic review will look at the economic costs of medication non-adherence. While an increasing number of studies have shown the impact of medication non-adherence on mortality and morbidity, the economic consequences of medication non-adherence are not well studied. Based on a thorough analysis of the existing evidence, the consortium plans to present a model to calculate the costs of non-adherence, which will also be relevant for determining the cost-effectiveness of adherence interventions. Having such a model in place as a tool to calculate real costs associated with non-adherence would mean a major step forward for policy discussions regarding funding of adherence programs.

With still 18 months to go, the ABC project will not take a vacation, but will continue with the same enthusiasm to finalize the systematic reviews and validate some of the insights into empirical studies. More specifically, the following projects are about ready to be launched once ethical approval has been obtained:

- a) a cross-sectional survey to investigate the prevalence and determinants of medication adherence across Europe
- b) a survey in European health professionals on their adherence practices
- c) a survey in European pharmaceutical companies to learn about their strategies for encouraging medication adherence
- d) a review of the curricula of medical, nursing or pharmacy schools throughout Europe to assess the breadth of education and training on medication adherence.

The ultimate goal of the ABC project is to produce evidence-based policy recommendations for improving adherence. The overview presented above illustrates that step-by-step we are coming closer to this goal, which even more stimulates our engagement and perseverance.

Could it be that soccer teams experience the same feelings during the world cup: small victories, one by one, all necessary keys to ultimately winning the finals? Watching the diversity of tasks within the ABC project, one starts to realize that its accomplishments would never be possible without team work. Starting with a consortium of European partners who had never worked together before, but who share the common goal of improving medication adherence throughout Europe and the rest of the world, we realize that we are lucky: we have the rich opportunity to collaborate and learn from a wealth of disciplines including physicians, nurses, psychologists, health economists, and statisticians: It is only by maximally exploiting each other's unique strengths that the ABC project is able to move forward to the next round of success, and the next round... and the next one to realize the ultimate mission of the ABC project: a better use of medication by Europeans...



The Expert Consensus Guideline Series: Adherence Problems in Patients with Serious and Persistent Mental Illness

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The Expert Consensus Guideline Series: Adherence Problems in Patients with Serious and Persistent Mental Illness

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Poor adherence to medication treatment can have devastating consequences for patients with mental illness. The Expert Consensus Guidelines: Adherence Problems in Patients with Serious and Persistent Mental Illness, published recently in the Journal of Clinical Psychiatry, presents expert recommendations of various strategies to address adherence problems in patients with persistent mental illness and to improve patient outcomes. The recommendations were based on a survey asking about defining nonadherence, extent of adherence problems in schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, risk factors for

nonadherence, assessment methods, and interventions for specific types of adherence problems. The survey was completed by 41 (85%) of the 48 experts to whom it was sent. The results of the literature review and survey were used to develop recommendations for assessing and improving adherence in patients with serious mental illness. The majority of the experts believed the average patient with schizophrenia or bipolar disorder in their practices takes only 51%-70% of prescribed medication. Poor insight and lack of illness awareness, distress associated with specific side effects or a general fear of side effects, inadequate efficacy with persistent symptoms, and believing medications are no longer needed were identified as the most important factors leading to adherence problems in schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. The major conclusions could be summarised by the statement that adherence problems are complex and multidetermined. Multiple predicaments may be involved, requiring a combination of interventions. It is important to identify the specific factors that may be contributing to a patient's adherence problems in order to customize interventions to target those problems.

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19686636/>

19th WONCA World Global Conference of Family Doctors 19-23.05.2010 Cancun, Mexico

From 19th to 23 May 2010 the **19th Wonca World Conference of Family Doctors (Wonca Cancun 2010)**, under the motto "**THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGs): THE CONTRIBUTION OF FAMILY MEDICINE**" was held in Cancun, Mexico. The 19th Wonca World Conference of Family Doctors was the biggest and most important event of family medicine professionals in the world, attracting more than 5,000 doctors with experience in clinical affairs, administration, education, research, epidemiology and other health-related issues. ABC project researchers contributed a workshop "How can a busy physician help patients take prescribed medicines correctly?." It was conducted by Ass. Prof. Przemyslaw Kardas and his co-workers from Medical University of Lodz, who presented major issues related to adherence. Presenters' words were illustrated with humorous scenes depicting situations from family doctor's practice.





ESPACOMP 2010 – 14th Symposium of the European Society for Patient Adherence, COMpliance and Persistence

17-18 September 2010, Lodz, Poland

From Przemyslaw Kardas, President of the ESPACOMP 2010 Organising Committee:

The ambitious aim of this year's ESPACOMP conference is to encourage researchers from all over Europe to conduct scientific research in the field of adherence, and share it with their peers. Scientific programme is loaded with keynote lectures and multiple oral and poster presentations. The thematic spectrum is wide ranging and highly attractive, thanks to a large number of submissions received. Excellent speakers will provide the audience with up-to-date information useful for both scientific work and clinical practice. Sign up to hear what's new in the field! We hope that you will enjoy this exceptional conference.

The full programme and registration is now available from www.espacomp.eu.

1st Polish Educational Day on Patient Adherence to Prescribed Medication: How to Help Patients Achieve Maximum Benefits from Prescribed Treatment?

18 September 2010, Lodz, Poland

The organisers of ESPACOMP 2010 Symposium, Medical University of Lodz, decided to take advantage of the unique opportunity of holding this annual meeting in Poland for the first time and planned the accompanying event: the First Polish Educational Day on Patient Adherence: How to Help Patients Achieve Maximum Benefits from Prescribed Treatment? Patient adherence is not a well known field in Poland. Medical and economic consequences of patient adherence to medication are not in the focus of interest of healthcare environments, while interventions for solving this problem are scarce. It is not widely recognised either that non-compliance has severe consequences for all – patients, doctors, pharmacists and the society as a whole. Additional costs spent by the Polish Nationals Health Fund due to patient non-adherence are estimated at 6 billion zloty per year – that is as much as 10% of its yearly budget, and the total annual spending on primary healthcare in Poland! It is therefore worth promoting the problem alongside interventions that can reduce its scale. In response to this need the First Educational Day on Patient Adherence, addressed to the Polish audience: doctors, pharmacists, nurses, students and other professionals interested in the field of compliance, was designed. The programme covers such important practical issues as reasons for non-adherence to therapeutic prescriptions, consequences of non-adherence as well as practical methods of compliance improvement. The First Polish Educational Day on Patient Adherence will be organized on the 18th of September 2010, 9.00-14.00, in the Museum of the City of Lodz, 15 Ogrodowa Str. Participation is free of charge, for more information please visit www.zmr.lodz.pl.

**Pierwszy Polski Dzień Edukacyjny
Przestrzegania Zaleceń
Terapeutycznych**



Łódź, 18 września 2010

ABC Survey on Pharmaceutical Industry Initiatives to Support Medication Adherence



The goal of the ABC survey is to develop an inventory of methods used by the pharmaceutical industry to promote patient adherence to medications. The survey is addressed to members of the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA) and the European Generic Medicines Association (EGA) members. The results of the pilot survey were discussed at Eyeforpharma 7th Annual Patient Adherence & Relationship Marketing Summit in Zurich, 16-17 June, 2010.