

Statistics

- **Medication noncompliance -- the failure to take prescription drugs as prescribed -- is as dangerous and costly as many illnesses.**

When prescriptions are written--

1/3 of consumers take the medicine as directed

1/3 of consumers take some of the medicine

1/3 of consumers never fill the prescription

- **The World Health Organization estimates that only 50% of patients typically follow doctors' orders when taking prescription drugs.** Medication noncompliance is not only dangerous for consumers - it's the fourth leading cause of death in the United States - it costs the healthcare industry upwards of \$150 billion annually. This includes \$50 billion in lost productivity.

Ref: World Health Organization (2003) (PDF) [Adherence to Long-Term Therapies: Evidence for Action](#) ISBN 92 4 154599

American Journal of Health System Pharmacists; 60(7):657

- **According to survey data from the Institute for Safe Medication Practices (ISMP), lack of adequate written information and time constraints hinder nurses' efforts to educate patients about how to take their medications after discharge from the hospital.** Twenty-five percent of nurses cited a lack of written materials about medications as a frequent problem; 30% felt there was a lack of materials available in the patient's native language; and 25% said that available materials were not suitable for the patient's health literacy or reading levels.

Institute of Safe Medication Practices Oct. 2, 2003 Medication Safety Alert

- **Emergency care may be required if consumers fail to take their medications properly.** Increased physician visits may be required because of medication noncompliance and the patient's condition does not improve. If the physician is not aware of the noncompliance, higher doses or additional medications might be prescribed which are unnecessary and possibly dangerous. Additional diagnostic tests may be ordered if the condition does not improve or worsens. Additional or unnecessary alternative treatments may be prescribed as a result of noncompliance.

Ref: U.S. Office of Inspector Gen. (OIG) 1990 Stats--Medication Regimens: Causes of Non-Compliance

- **Cultural differences among older adults is another concern, since about 10% of older Americans are born outside of the U.S., and almost 13% do not speak English as their primary language.** Many cultures have their own unique beliefs regarding medication and even health care professionals. A study of older Chinese-American adults found that medication misuse may have been due to a number of cultural factors, including reliance on Chinese medications and herbs, cultural views on authority that affect the patient-provider relationship, and language barriers.

Ref: US Pharmacist 2007 32(6):HS20-HS30.

Language barriers are especially challenging when trying to properly counsel a patient. It is difficult for older patients to make appropriate health care choices if they cannot understand instructions, drug interactions, or even the necessity for the medication