

Development of a Process to Improve Medication Adherence in Patients with Rheumatoid Arthritis in the Specialty Pharmacy Setting

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BACKGROUND

- Specialty pharmacy is one of the fastest growing segments in healthcare and is estimated to exceed \$300 billion in annual expenditure by 2021.
- The role of specialty pharmacies, which serve patients with complex disease states such as rheumatoid arthritis, is critical to patient outcomes.
- URAC-accredited specialty pharmacies must actively engage patients in strategies that improve adherence and health outcomes.
- Performance measures, such as medication possession ratio, help pharmacies measure the effectiveness of their processes and identify areas for improvement.

OBJECTIVES

- To develop a disease-specific patient questionnaire to be used during monthly refill calls for patients with rheumatoid arthritis.
- To assess the change in adherence to non-infused biologic medications after the incorporation of refill questions specific for rheumatoid arthritis.

METHODS

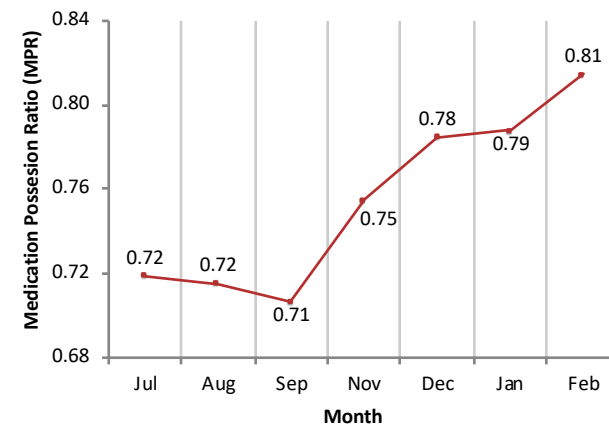
Study Design	• Prospective, interventional study
Study Location	• Specialty Care Pharmacy at an independent community pharmacy in North Carolina
Inclusion Criteria	• Patients 18 years or older • Have rheumatoid arthritis • Receive at least one non-infused biologic from the study pharmacy • Mean medication possession ratio (MPR) less than 90%
Exclusion Criteria	• Unavailable or unreachable for telephone follow-up
Study Procedure	• During the monthly synchronization call, a pharmacist or technician asked eligible patients a set of specific questions regarding rheumatoid arthritis, developed using 2015 American College of Rheumatology guidelines • Questions assess patient overall health, adherence, and adverse medication events
Analysis	• Change in adherence was assessed by mean MPR for three months prior to intervention (June 2018 - August 2018) and six months following intervention (November 2018 - March 2019)

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS QUESTIONNAIRE

Question	Answer Options
1 Are you able to: - Stand up from a straight chair? - Walk outdoors on flat ground? - Get on/off toilet? - Reach and get down a 5-pound object? (e.g., bag of sugar) from above your head? - Open car doors? - Do outside work (e.g., yard work)? - Wait in line for 15 minutes? - Lift heavy objects? - Move heavy objects? - Go up two or more flights of stairs?	Without any difficulty With some difficulty With much difficulty Unable to do
2 Are you feeling relief of your symptoms?	Yes No
3 Are you experiencing any side effects of the medication?	Yes No
4 When is your follow-up appointment with the doctor?	Open response
5 Have you had recent infections, been on antibiotics, or had recent hospitalizations?	Yes No
6 Have you experienced any allergic reaction (shortness of breath, rash) or injection site reaction during administration of drug?	Yes No
7 How many doses do you have left?	Open response
8 On a scale from 1 to 10, how well do you think this medication is working for you?	Scale of 1 to 10

MEDICATION POSSESSION RATIO



A total of **29 patients** with an MPR less than 90% were eligible.

A total of **18 patients** completed the study; 11 patients were unenrolled due to discontinuation of medication (n=2), therapy change to oral DMARD (n=3), transfer to other specialty pharmacy (n=2), or no response after three attempts (n=4).

DISCUSSION

- Pharmacy technicians reported difficulty and hesitation from patients during initial month of intervention (November).
- If a patient was unable to participate during the monthly synchronization call, the pharmacist conducted a follow-up call in order to complete the question set when the patient became available.
- Data from March 2019 is pending.

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

- The rheumatoid arthritis questionnaire was successfully utilized by pharmacists and pharmacy technicians during the monthly calls.
- The implementation of the disease-specific refill questionnaire led to increased medication adherence and enhanced communication with the patient in regards to their health and outcome of therapy.
- In the future, the implementation of other disease-specific questionnaires will be useful to track and increase adherence and additionally help reduce overall health care costs in these patients.