

'New Medication Form' for prescribed medications

This form has been developed by a physician for facilitating patient-provider communication about prescription medications. Inadequate instructions about prescribed medications have been identified as an important factor contributing to noncompliance as well as adverse drug reactions particularly in the elderly population. Elderly patients have variable perceptions about participating in medication decision making. Patients want to receive more information from their physicians about their medications such as duration and side effects. They are interested in not only getting verbal but also written information about their medications. Unfortunately physicians often fail to communicate critical elements of medication use when initiating new medications. They also overestimate the extent to which they discussed the patient's ability to follow the treatment plan, elicit the patient's opinion about the prescribed medication and discussed the risks of the medication. On the other hand the reading difficulty of the consumer medication information in the package inserts is often higher than the average reading skills of American adults. The format and the font size are also not optimal for comprehensibility. Only a minority of patients read the patient package insert (PPI) for drugs. More than half who read do not understand it nor are able to recall the information provided. The New Medication Form (NMF) has been designed to address these important barriers associated with prescribing new medications.

The NMF tool provides information on important aspects of a prescribed medication; frequency, duration, purpose, side effects, additional instructions for follow-up tests and warning signs to contact the health provider. It has a large font size and enough white space for optimizing readability. It has a Flesch reading score of more than 80% which corresponds to a 5th grade level. It can be customized according to each patient (See appendix II). This tool is easy to administer by health providers and ensures that all important medication elements are covered. The steps for administration are provided below. These steps ensure that verbal communication is consistent with the written information provided. In addition it provides an opportunity for providers to

check the comprehension of the instructions via use of the 'Teach Back Technique'. This technique has been found to be effective in improving patient outcomes. It is also recommended as a patient safety practice by National Quality Forum. This tool is currently being used in an inner city hospital for all new medications being prescribed to patients during their hospital stay to improve their understanding of the new medication and improve compliance. It has the potential to be used in both outpatient and inpatient settings.

Steps for the effective use of the 'New Medication Form'

Step 1:

The health provider fills out 1 form for every new medication prescribed.

Step 2:

The provider fills the blank form at the bed side. He or she loudly communicates every item of the form while filling it.

Step 3:

At the completion of all the items, the provider then goes over the form with the patient. This time the provider reads out the questions to the patient to ensure that the instructions provided have been understood. If the patient is unclear about some of the answers, then the provider explains the specific items again. The provider again checks the understanding. The process repeats itself till the patient answers all the items on the form.

Step 4:

The providers gives the form to the patient to keep it and use it if need be.