



EDITORIAL

Breakthroughs in enhancing compliance

It was my third phone call after registering and re-registering to no avail at the “customer-friendly” web site. There was the usual 15 minutes on hold and the transfers to endless voice mail options, none of which applied to my situation. Was I trying to secure a rebate coupon on my latest purchase? Upgrade my Windows software? Validate that lifetime rust-proofing on my car? Nope. Simply trying to refill my prescriptions.

Like many of you, I prefer to renew my prescriptions online, by phone, or by mail. And as I get older, I acquire chronic problems—minor conditions like diabetes and hypertension—that necessitate regular prescription renewals.

Well into the third hour of investigation, I was hot on the trail of my medication renewals. Now, if I could only remember which pet's name I gave (Gabby? Mouser? Rasha?) and the unique combination of at least 5 numbers, 3 letters, and a punctuation mark (not including “-’s”), I'd be all set. Let's see, I wrote those double-super-secret passwords on that file card and placed it on my desk somewhere...

Finally, success—well, almost. There was the obligatory physician reauthorization, even though he had renewed this script only 4 months ago. And of course, that Humalog is a second-tier medication (maybe I should use purified pork insulin?).

OK, you get the picture.

It is no wonder many patients fail to renew their medications even once. It is no surprise our patients fail to achieve goals for the treatment of diabetes and hypertension. Instead of enabling health, we continue to assure patients have countless barriers placed in their paths. It is almost as if insurers and pharmacy benefit managers are making sure we don't use our benefits.

So here are a few simple practical suggestions for purveyors of medications. When your web site changes, why don't you notify your users of the new web address? Why not assure that the phone number on the back of our insurance cards gets us a live person who can provide useful information? How about allowing physicians to determine the length of renewal rather than making arbitrary decisions; and, after receiving initial approval, assume medications are needed on an ongoing basis. And at your web site, in addition to posting arcane prescription numbers, why don't you make it possible to simply check a straight-forward description of medications for renewal?

It's time physicians and other health professionals take a stand against such chicanery.

Jeff Susman, MD
Editor, JFP

EDITOR

Jeffrey L. Susman, MD,
University of Cincinnati

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Cheryl A. Flynn, MD, MS, State University
of New York, Syracuse

John Hickner, MD, MSc, University of
Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine

James Stevermer, MD, MSPH,
University of Missouri, Columbia (*Clinical
Inquiries*)

Richard P. Usatine, MD, University of
Texas Health Sciences Center at San Antonio
(*Photo Rounds*)

CONSULTING EDITOR

Bernard Ewigman, MD, MSPH,
University of Chicago Pritzker School of
Medicine (*Clinical Inquiries*)

ASSISTANT EDITORS

Burt Banks, MD, East Tennessee State
University, Bristol

Doug Campos-Outcalt, MD, MPA,
University of Arizona, Phoenix

Mark R. Ellis, MD, MSPH, Cox Family
Practice Residency, Springfield, Mo

Charissa Fotinos, MD, University of
Washington, Seattle

Gary N. Fox, MD, St. Vincent Mercy
Medical Center, Toledo, Ohio

Rick Guthmann, MD, University of Illinois,
Chicago

Eric Henley, MD, MPH, University of
Illinois, Rockford

Keith B. Holten, MD, University of
Cincinnati

Kevin Y. Kane, MD, MSPH, University
of Missouri, Columbia

Gary Kelsberg, MD, FFAFP, University
of Washington, Renton

Valerie J. King, MD, MPH, Oregon Health &
Science University, Portland

Todd D. McDiarmid, MD, Moses Cone
Family Medicine Residency, Greensboro, NC

Jon O. Neher, MD, University of Washington,
Renton

M. Norman Oliver, MD, MA, University
of Virginia, Charlottesville

Audrey Paulman, MD, MMM, University
of Nebraska College of Medicine, Omaha

Paul M. Paulman, MD, University of
Nebraska College of Medicine, Omaha

Goutham Rao, MD, MPA, University of
Pittsburgh

Rick Ricer, MD, University of Cincinnati

Peter C. Smith, MD, University of Colorado
Health Sciences Center, Denver

Fred Tudiver, MD, East Tennessee State
University, Johnson City

EDITORIAL BOARD

Frederick Chen, MD, MPH, University of
Washington, Seattle

Larry Culpepper, MD, MPH, Boston
University Medical Center, Boston, Mass

John W. Ely, MD, MSPH, University of
Iowa College of Medicine, Iowa City

Linda French, MD, Michigan State
University, East Lansing

Theodore G. Ganiats, MD, University of
California-San Diego Health Outcomes
Assessment Program, La Jolla, Calif

Paul Gordon, MD, University of Arizona,
Tucson

Caryl J. Heaton, DO, University of Medicine
and Dentistry of New Jersey, Newark

Fred Miser, MD, MA, Ohio State
University, Columbus

Kevin Peterson, MD, MPH, University of
Minnesota, St Paul

Kendra Schwartz, MD, MSPH, Wayne
State University, Detroit, Mich

Douglas R. Smucker, MD, MPH, Moses Cone
Family Medicine Residency, Greensboro, NC

Jack Westfall, MD, University of Colorado

Direct editorial information and inquiries to:

EDITORIAL OFFICE

Health Professions Building, Department
of Family Medicine, PO Box 670582,
Cincinnati, OH 45267-0582.
Telephone: (513) 558-4021.

PUBLISHING OFFICES

Dowden Health Media, Inc.,
110 Summit Avenue, Montvale, NJ 07645.
Telephone: (201) 782-5735.
Fax: (201) 505-5890