Preventing and Resolving Drug Therapy Problems through Patients’ Medication Experience: Strategies Employed by MTM Pharmacists

Sarah Joyce Shoemaker, Ph.D., PharmD; Djenane Ramalho de Oliveira, Ph.D., MS; Mateus R. Alves, M.S. Ph.D. Candidate; Molly J. Ekstrand, B. Pharm A.E.-C., C.D.E.

Additional MTM Research published utilizing Fairview Practice Based Research

Background recommended readings:

Contact Information for the Authors:
Sarah J. Shoemaker
Abt Associates Inc.
Email: sarah_shoemaker@abtassoc.com

Djenane Ramalho de Oliveira
Fairview Pharmacy Services, Minnesota, USA
Email: dolivei1@fairview.org

Mateus R. Alves
University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA
Email: farmateus@gmail.com

Molly J. Ekstrand
Fairview Pharmacy Services, Minnesota, USA
Email: mekstra2@fairview.org
The medication experience is a valuable tool for practitioners to understand patients’ needs, identify and resolve DTPs, and tailor patient education and counseling for chronic medications.

### Medication Experience Defined
The medication experience is an individual’s subjective experience of taking a medication in his/her daily life. It begins as an encounter with a chronic medication. It is an encounter that is known before it happens and is often a reaction to the symbol that medication holds. The experience may include positive or negative bodily effects. The unmitting nature of chronic medication causes often an individual to question the need for the medication. Subsequently, the individual may exert control by altering the way he/she takes the medication and often in part because of the gained expertise with the medication in his/her own body [Shoemaker, S.J., Ramalho de Oliveira, D. Pharm World Sci. 2008;30(1):86-91.]

### Why research is needed:
Pharmacists in MTM practice have struggled blending evidence-based practice guidelines for medication use with a patient’s medication experience to improve patient’s medication outcomes. This preliminary research aims to identify and disseminate strategies to help pharmacists in MTM practice.

### Methods
Qualitative inquiry using focus group of 10 MTM pharmacists with 3+ years of experience and a pharmacist’s 9-month journal. The focus group searched for evidence of medication experience related to drug therapy problems (DTPs) and useful employed strategies. Pharmacists’ journal included daily practice situations involving patients’ medication experience and DTPs, including strategies she used to intervene and resolve problems. All the authors independently analyzed the focus group and journal data using Max van Manen’s interpretive phenomenology as the theoretical framework. The themes and strategies were then harmonized by the authors.

### Results
MTM pharmacists commonly encountered patients’ medication experiences in their practices. The pharmacists identified several examples of drug therapy problems with an associated medication experience at the root. The medication experience was a meaningful construct to guide patient education and counseling on medications within a MTM visit to ultimately solve and prevent DTPs.

#### General Medication Experience Related to MTM

- **Mood and Fatigue
- Difficult Drug Needed
- Unintended Drug

#### Pharmacist Resolution Strategies

- **Listen and Acknowledge Concerns** about how the medication is altering the condition to help the patient to understand the rationale for the medication.
- **Negotiate** a way to alter the therapy if it doesn’t fit the patient.
- **Shared Decision Making**: Give appropriate options, allow the patient to choose a preferable drug.

#### Categorized Examples of DTP & the Medication Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DTP</th>
<th>Medication Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unnecessary Medication</td>
<td>The patient had a reaction to a medication which was not working. The pharmacist had to find a better option for the patient.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for Additional Therapy</td>
<td>The patient had a reaction to their treatment, the pharmacist had to find a different medication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactions</td>
<td>The patient had a reaction to a medication which was not working. The pharmacist had to find a better option for the patient.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for Synergistic Drug Therapy</td>
<td>The patient had a reaction to a medication which was not working. The pharmacist had to find a better option for the patient.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dosage Too Low</td>
<td>The patient had a reaction to a medication which was not working. The pharmacist had to find a better option for the patient.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dosage Too High</td>
<td>The patient had a reaction to a medication which was not working. The pharmacist had to find a better option for the patient.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Strategies Used by MTM Pharmacists

- **Listen to the patient’s concern:** Ask the patient what they currently experience with the medication.
- **Empathize:** The pharmacist shows understanding of the patient’s experience with the medication.
- **Empower Patient:** The pharmacist encourages the patient to become an active participant in their own care.
- **Negotiate:** The patient and pharmacist work together to find a solution that is acceptable to both.
- **Shared Decision Making:** The patient and pharmacist work together to find a solution that is acceptable to both.
- **Provide additional education:** The pharmacist provides the patient with additional information about the medication.
- **Evaluate the patient’s progress:** The pharmacist evaluates the patient’s progress towards their goals.
- **Discuss the patient’s concerns:** The pharmacist discusses the patient’s concerns and addresses them.
- **Help the patient to understand:** The pharmacist helps the patient to understand the reasons for their medication.
- **Encourage the patient to take action:** The pharmacist encourages the patient to take action towards their goals.
- **Provide additional support:** The pharmacist provides the patient with additional support.

### History of Medication Therapy Management at Fairview Health System
The MTM program utilized in the present study is a service of Fairview Pharmacy Services, which is a subsidiary of Fairview Health Services, a Minnesota nonprofit corporation and one of the largest health care provider organizations in the state. Fairview Health Services, in partnership with the University of Minnesota, is a network of 7 hospitals, 48 primary care clinics, 55 specialty clinics, and 32 retail pharmacies that serves Minneapolis-St. Paul, as well as communities throughout greater Minnesota and the Upper Midwest.

From 1997-1998, Fairview Pharmacy Services established pharmaceutical care practices, initially in Fairview retail pharmacies and then in primary care clinics, where pharmacists were not associated with dispensing activities and could more easily become part of the health care team. All MTM pharmacists within the system use the same standardized patient care process following the pharmaceutical care model developed by Strand, Capoelle and Hepler (1998; 2004). They are overseen by the MTM management team to promote consistency. Since 1997 they have documented outcomes on over 12,000 patients. The group practice now consists of a network of 18 certified pharmacists, 2 residents at 22 Minnesota locations in primary care, specialty clinics and specialty pharmacy services.

### Conclusion
Our study provides preliminary evidence of the value of the medication experience for patient education and counseling on chronic medications in MTM practice. Preliminary strategies were identified and may prove valuable for tailoring patient education and counseling on medications to resolve DTPs.