

BILCARE VIEWPOINT

Creating sustainable growth through an effective compliance model

Secure supply chain. Secured brand.

Patients' lack of adherence to their prescribed medication regimen is a common problem in the pharma sector. While this can result in deterioration of health and necessitate secondary and tertiary medication for the patient, its impact on the loss of direct sales for the brand owner is also considerable.

By simply creating a model that empowers patients to manage their medication regimen, increased brand loyalty and sustainable growth for the brand owner can be achieved.

Introduction

The societal goal of any pharma company is to provide effective medication that cures the patients from the ailments they are suffering from, or to prevent further deterioration of their health in cases of chronic diseases. At first glance this may seem to conflict with the financial goal of continuous growth in top line. But it is not so, when one takes a closer look at the problems associated with non-compliance for the patient community.

The patient compliance levels follow a pattern. The patient intends to enjoy good health, and hence initial patient compliance is high. The compliance trend decreases with the passing of time due to various reasons. Over a period, the compliance levels have been known to drop below 50%, while the average compliance levels attain 70% at best.

Challenges

1. Difficulties for the patients in maintaining the routine as per prescription:-

There is every reason to believe that a patient who understands how the medication regimen is designed to help him would be interested in being 100% compliant to the same. The most common reasons for non-compliance cited are: missing the dosage due to preoccupation with another task at the prescribed time, or lack of discipline in personal life. This results in “known non-compliance”.

2. Perceived ineffectiveness of the prescription:-

With a number of counterfeits on the market, it is possible for a patient to mistakenly take a counterfeit version of his drug.

This results in “Unknown non-compliance”, since the patient does not realize that he is not taking the genuine medication for quite some

time, resulting in a gradual deterioration of the health condition.

Eventually when the impact on health is noticeable, he may associate the lack of results with ineffectiveness of the product.

3. Nature of chronic diseases that do not have a complete cure:-

In some medical conditions, it may be impossible to improve the health condition and at best the drug can help disease at bay. In many cases the impact of non-compliance does not lead to dramatic physical impairment, which results in the patient believing that there is no adverse effect of non-compliance. In such cases, non-compliance with the medication regimen can be considered “unknown non-compliance”

The medication’s effectiveness at keeping the ailment at bay is eventually impacted, resulting in deterioration of quality of life and possibly even in forced changes to medication/dosage levels or even the product itself. The cost of secondary/tertiary levels of treatment is usually higher than that of primary medication, thereby costing the patient more money.

Approach for better patient compliance

While doctors can play an active facilitator’s role in the patient compliance program, it is the brand owner who is best equipped to make the program see the daylight. While it is in line with its societal goals, it should be evident that the program will also result in increased sales for the brand owner’s product. Here are the necessary steps for building the patient compliance program

1. Create user-friendly package for medication:-

The most important step towards a solution is to create a user-friendly

package that enables a communication channel with the patients. This will help the patients by providing reminders and follow ups as per the prescribed medication regimen, and also remind them when their stocks of medication are running low..

2. Create an effective communication strategy:-

While the communication channel can facilitate the program, only an effective communication strategy that convinces the patient of the need to comply with the medication regimen can lead to success. Doctors and hospitals can play an important role at this stage.

3. Identify the target customer base:-

Doctors and hospitals can play an important role, even in identification of a target patient community for participation in a program, based on factors like the criticality of the diseases, patient profile, need for long-term medication, etc. The doctors, in turn, will benefit due to enhanced confidence levels for the prescribed medication, ultimately leading to increased trust in the doctor- patient relationship.

4. Empower the customer base:-

This stage will consist of a registration process, setting the alerts mechanism, providing additional information about the medication regimen to the enrolled patients and providing the communication devices. It is worthwhile for pharma companies to consider additional investment in tools that can empower the targeted customer base. This will result in long-term customer loyalty because of the value-added services provided. In turn, this will create a pool of patients in the market place who demand the genuine product from the retail chain every time, thus ensuring brand recognition in the market place, driving the counterfeiters away from the brand owners' products.

Benefits

The negative effects of either known or unknown non-compliance with medication regimen are serious for the patient community. It can lead to slow deterioration of health and necessitate secondary or tertiary medication to limit further damage.

A win-win opportunity for the pharma company is thereby presented. While patient compliance will help patients enjoy better health, or prevent further deterioration through appropriate medication using the genuine product, it will also foster brand loyalty and create sustainable growth from demand-side pull for the product of that pharma company.

This also helps the fight against counterfeits; one of the causes for "unknown compliance", through empowered customer bases that play the role of a "virtual inspector" for the pharma company in the market place. The ultimate effect will be a mature ecosystem that discourages counterfeiters from focusing on the brand owners' products, ensuring further growth in sales for the genuine product.