

PRINT-OSF pilot uses automated outreach to help people stay on track with medications

A new pilot program at OSF HealthCare aims to help people overcome barriers to taking their medications as prescribed. It uses automated text messages to identify care gaps and connect patients with pharmacists for personalized support.

The initiative focuses on patients who may be at risk of medication nonadherence, particularly those taking medications for common chronic conditions such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol. By using insurance data to identify patients who may be falling behind on refills, the program aims to reach people who might otherwise go without needed support. The tool serves as an orchestration engine that automatically identifies non-adherent people based on established criteria and schedules targeted outreach and reminders for them.

Nicole Swenson, PharmD, director pharmacy digital care, OSF HealthCare, says for anyone newly prescribed a medication, side effects can become an unexpected obstacle.

"Probably more likely they stop taking it altogether, especially for conditions like high blood pressure, because the patient may not feel that high blood pressure. So, it may not seem really important to take that medication, especially if they're having a side effect," says Swenson.

Better than phone calls

Rather than relying on traditional cold-calling methods, people can respond directly to text messages, indicate interest in assistance and be connected to a pharmacist through a streamlined scheduling process. Jason Scheid, PharmD, director of pharmacy services, OSF HealthCare, says this can be a more effective approach because many people don't like answering calls from an unknown phone number.

"Using some of these agentic type tools for advanced outreach efforts through automation, text response, scheduling we're able to capture a much larger audience and then make sure we're getting to those patients that need help the most," Scheid explains.

Automated text messages also allow people to respond at their convenience and schedule a conversation when it works for them.

The pilot helps to bridge the longstanding communication gap between patients and providers, enabling pharmacists to spend less time on manual coordination efforts and more time delivering personalized care. The initiative was developed through a collaboration with Digital Innovation Development within OSF Innovation, Pharmacy Services and Humana which has a significant number of members at risk of falling out of medication compliance.

Learning about barriers

Scheid points out that through the pilot, they're learning about a variety of barriers to medication adherence.

"Access to a pharmacy, transportation to get to a pharmacy, just the complicated regimens people are on with multiple medications and multiple frequencies and times of day they're taking the

medications so there's a combination of things going on that make it a challenging situation for patients."

The technology is intended to offer a one-touch support, making it easier to connect people to the right resources according to Nicole Swenson.

"We're looking at how we can reach out via text, which we haven't done in the past, to provide those refill reminders and then also offer visits and see if the visits really do have a positive influence on the medication refills so that we can improve adherence for the patient and know what barriers they're experiencing."

What's next

The program is currently focused on patients covered by Humana insurance, with the potential to expand if the approach proves successful. Its broader goal is to identify care gaps earlier and make support easier for people to access. It is also an opportunity to test language that best works to get people targeted to respond.

Medication refill adherence improved from zero compliant patients at program launch in August to 92 compliant patients through targeted reminders and coaching, demonstrating the measurable impact of proactive patient engagement.

The next phase of the pilot will leverage predictive analytics and AI-driven models to identify patients who may be at risk of medication nonadherence *before* gaps occur.