



July 14th, 2014

Health Care System... More Than Your Doctor

The role of the pharmacist has been expanding in recent years – and, with the increased pressures on the resources of the health care system, it couldn't come at a better time. No longer the “count, pour, lick, stick” model of the past, the pharmacist now plays an active role in primary care, assisting in the assessment of conditions, direct care – even prescribing. And, at a time when medications are the mainstay of most therapy, pharmacists are an essential resource.

Yikes! UK Researchers have found that 25% of patients being treated for high blood pressure are either not taking their medications or not taking them as prescribed. Not surprisingly, these same patients were found to have the most uncontrolled blood pressure, placing them at risk of heart damage/attack, stroke, aneurysm, kidney disease, blindness... even dementia. It's not called the silent killer for nothing! Talk to your physician & pharmacist about getting control of your blood pressure!

A Canadian study has found that up to a third of “initial” prescriptions are never filled. This was associated with several factors: cost of the medication, recent hospitalization and multiple concurrent conditions (including patient confusion). Given that medication treatment is the most common therapy in managing many chronic conditions and, often, the most economical treatment, it actually pays for the health care system to address this issue.

Another important health care provider role is that of Community Health Workers (CHWs – also known as Health Care Assistants). CHWs can play a very important role in helping patients transition from the hospital setting back to their homes. Many studies have shown this time to be critical in terms of risk of relapse or in adherence to recommended therapy and now a study in Philadelphia has demonstrated that trained CHWs can significantly improve the transition – ultimately with savings to the health care system.

Good health often requires the participation of many different health care providers – and sometimes it is this very factor that can lead to confusion and sub-optimal therapy. You can always talk to your pharmacist for advice on navigating this complex system.