

Patient compliance: The importance of pharmaceutical labelling

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One of the top challenges faced by the pharmaceutical industry is patient compliance. Millions are spent each year on the research and development of pharmaceuticals that provide effective treatment, yet an estimated 31% of prescriptions that are issued do not get collected, and 40% of those prescriptions are not taken as directed.



Apart from the side-effects that patients may experience when medication is not taken as prescribed, there are also severe consequences for the pharmaceutical and healthcare industries. Statistics from United States statistics suggest that non-adherence costs the US Healthcare System approximately \$100 billion each year, including a staggering 125 000 hospitalisations annually.

"Labelling is one of the crucial factors that determines the safety and integrity of the product," explains Timothy Beattie, General Manager of Pyrotec PackMedia - a leading supplier of informational on-pack devices. "The manufacturer has a responsibility to ensure that information on the label is concise, clear and easy-to-understand. On-pack information speaks directly to the patient and has a powerful impact on patient outcomes."

There is often limited space to convey all of the information required by law on a product's packaging, specifically pertaining to the medicine composition, potential side-effects, contraindications, etc. "However, compromising the content should not be considered," warns Beattie. "Reducing the size of the font can result in the information being unreadable and increases the likelihood of patients not following the dosage instructions."

The quality and clarity of information provided may also impact on a manufacturer's bottom line. Easy-to-follow instructions have a better chance of being understood by patients, thus increasing the likelihood of treatment being effective. In the case of over-the-counter medicine, this may even result in a referral or repeat purchase.

"There are various options available to contain the information required, but research has shown that multi-page leaflet-labels are more likely to be read - and also retained - than a loose leaflet inserted into a carton," says Beattie. Multi-page leaflet-labels, such as Pyrotec PackMedia's Fix-a-Form™, are an ideal option for pharmaceutical manufacturers as they are able to contain extensive information within the confines of an adhesive sticker. Fix-a-Form™ also allows for variable manufacturer on-pack data to be included ensuring complete traceability, and is also available in Braille.

"Once the product leaves the pharmacy, the only form of communication the manufacturer has with the patient is through the packaging, so it is our responsibility to ensure that this information is as coherent as possible," concludes Beattie.

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