



mhca's e-Newsletter

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## **The Emotional Equation: Tackling Non-Adherence with Patient Experience**

*A Guest Article from Founder & CEO of Empath Labs Aaron J. Horowitz*

In the pharmaceutical industry, we develop drugs to treat the underlying disease, not just the symptoms. Yet, when it comes to adherence strategies, we often focus on treating the symptoms of non-adherence rather than addressing the root causes. To effectively improve adherence, we must focus on treating the “pathology” of non-adherence, which involves enhancing emotional engagement, providing emotional support, and fostering patient ownership over their health.

### **The Importance of Positive Patient Experience**

Improving patient experience builds positive associations between patients and their medical treatments. Just as a positive relationship with a healthy activity encourages repeated engagement, positive associations with healthcare routines lead patients to take a more active and willing role in their treatment. They don't adhere to their medication regimen simply because they "have to," but because they "want to" manage their health proactively.

Antoine de Saint-Exupery's quote captures the essence of fostering intrinsic motivation: "If you want to

build a ship, don't drum up people to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea." Our current strategies—pill reminders, push notifications, tracking apps—address the symptoms of non-adherence. While they provide quantifiable impacts, they only treat the surface level and can become burdensome over time.

### **Shifting the Perspective on Adherence**

We must shift our perspective and focus on the underlying causes of non-adherence. This involves creating ways to emotionally engage patients in their care and encouraging them to take ownership of their health. Patient experience is the key to achieving this goal.

A literature review published in "Patient Preference and Adherence" highlights the link between treatment satisfaction and adherence, compliance, and persistence[1]. The data suggests that greater treatment satisfaction is associated with better compliance and improved persistence. Similarly, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) states, "Patients' experiences with care, particularly communication with providers, correlate with adherence to medical advice and treatment plans." [2]

### **The ROI of Patient Experience**

Investing in patient experience is a win-win scenario. Improving patient experience makes patients feel happier and more supported. It also aligns with doing the right thing for the business. It builds stronger brand loyalty and positive associations with treatment that lead to better adherence - creating a tangible ROI.

### **Emotional Engagement and Ownership**

To foster emotional engagement and ownership, we must go beyond the RX and create wrap around programming that supports and encourages patients. This can include personalized communication, empathetic interactions, and providing patients with custom products and programs that support them as they begin a new therapeutic. When patients feel understood and valued, they are more likely to take an active role in their care.

#### **1. Personalized Communication**

Personalized communication helps patients feel seen and understood. Tailoring messages to individual patients' needs and preferences can enhance their engagement and satisfaction. This can be achieved through personalized follow-ups, tailored educational materials, and individualized support programs that address their unique challenges and health literacy levels.

#### **2. Empathetic Interactions**

Empathy in healthcare interactions can significantly impact patient experience. Training treatment coordinators to practice empathetic communication and active listening can help build trust and rapport with patients, making them more likely to adhere to their treatment plans.

#### **3. Custom Products and Programs**

Patients are delighted by products and programs that support them as they begin a new

therapeutic. Whether it be a welcome kit that comes with a drug, or purpose built comfort items, it is critical to begin building positive associations on day 1 of starting a new treatment program, and to continue creating the positive associations over the first month of treatment as routines and behaviors are being formed for adherence.

## The Big Picture

Improving patient experience is crucial to enhancing adherence for new therapeutics. By focusing on the underlying causes of non-adherence and fostering emotional engagement and ownership, we can create an environment that supports patients and encourages them to take an active role in their medication self-management. Investing in patient experience is not only beneficial for patients but also for the business, leading to higher adherence, persistence, and improved brand loyalty.

Let's prioritize creating wonderful experiences for all patients, ensuring that they feel supported, valued, and motivated to follow along with their treatment programs!

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Aaron's superpower is that his passion is infectious - he gets people excited about doing well by doing good. Growing up with human growth hormone deficiency inspired his mission to create technology that puts patients at the center of their own healthcare. Join us at the **mhca Summer Conference** in Providence, RI, where he will lead sessions on Navigating the AI Revolution and Exploring AI's Impact. [Register now!](#)

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