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## What Can Clinicians Really Do to Affect Medication-Taking Behavior? Chronic Disease Care Conference, November 3, 2005

How can clinicians enhance communication skills in self-management support, behavior change counseling, and collaborative care? Many clinicians feel frustrated at a lack of efficacy in helping patients change unhealthy lifestyle behaviors (from smoking to sedentary lifestyle, from diets to stress management). Some clinicians may even posit that health behavior change is not their job. Nonetheless, most clinicians accept that medications are their domain and responsibility. Therefore, the skills of collaborative communication may be most receptively and acceptably applied to the issue of strengthening medication adherence. Medication adherence is a major problem that affects both patient safety and quality improvement. In fact, enhancing medication adherence may be one of the most effective and efficient ways of improving clinical outcomes.

Strengthening Medication Adherence	Tips
<p>We have developed some training programs for clinicians to strengthen skills in enhancing medication adherence. Clinicians typically go through three stages in the training:</p>  <p><b>1. Denial:</b> Data and examples are presented to illustrate the extent of medication nonadherence.</p>  <p><b>2. Demoralization:</b> The extent and scope of the problem is often viewed as overwhelming at first.</p>  <p><b>3. Development:</b> The commitment to develop skills in detecting adherence issues and then engaging in collaborative problem-solving. As a side effect, these same collaborative communication skills can be applied to other lifestyle and behavior change areas than just medication adherence.</p>	<p><b>1. Normalize Non-Adherence &amp; Ask Permission:</b> <i>Many people have trouble taking their medications all the time. To create a medication plan that is safe and effective for you, it is important to know how you are taking your medications. Can we take the next few minutes to talk about that?</i></p> <p><b>2. Invite Patient Problem-Solving:</b> <i>Invite and explore patient's ideas and solutions in a collaborative style that supports patient problem-solving.</i></p> <p><b>3. Strong, Positive Close</b> <i>I strongly encourage you to take your medications regularly. This is one of the best ways to manage your _____ and prevent health problems in the future. Of course, the decision is entirely yours. I am confident that should you decide to carry out the plan we developed today, you can find a way to make it work for you.</i></p>