Why you don’t take your medicine according to the instructions...

...and why we should think differently about it

No. So what’s the problem? Are you lacking motivation? Some would blame you:

- “What we need are new ways to improve human motivation to take the medications... The holy grail here is to add motivation innovation to the mix”

Firlik, K., 2013. Why I went from neurosurgeon to entrepreneur

Is it that you don’t feel you’re being listened to by your doctor? Even though:

- “At the centre of service delivery is the patient”


Perhaps that’s part of it, because:

- Your doctor doesn’t actually know what you want nor understand your consumption contexts
- He/she may not realise that you struggle with misunderstood instructions, inconvenience, tablet size, bad taste/bitterness, side-effects, lack of support, complex regimens, lack of storage, lack of access, missing co-requisites, stigma... and competing priorities!

So who is responsible for your adherence? You are!

- “...the patient is free to decide whether to take the treatment or not”


- But you must also accept the consequences of your decisions! We are all responsible for the results of exercising our DIY healthcare rights

“Adherence is using skills and resources to follow an externally imposed pattern of behaviour sufficiently to achieve the patient’s objectives in context”

Implications of this definition include:

- Pharmaceutical manufacturers must understand patients more deeply so that medicine formulations can take better account of patient objectives and contexts
- Patient information must be available, comprehensible and consistent
- Practitioners must acknowledge where the power lies and educate patients
- The focus must then shift from arcane calculations to guiding patients on how best to achieve their objectives in context

Theoretical papers

Practical papers

Table 1: Definitions of adherence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>“The extent to which patients follow the instructions they are given for prescribed treatments.”</td>
<td>McDonald, Garg, &amp; Haynes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>“The extent to which patients’ behaviour matches agreed recommendations from the prescriber.”</td>
<td>Nunes et al.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>“Correctly taking the full therapeutic course of treatment”</td>
<td>Braveman, Goodman, Kafch, &amp; Schellenberg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>“A ratio of the number of drug doses taken to the number of doses prescribed over a given time period.”</td>
<td>Morrison, Steaufer, &amp; Baufman</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>