

ABSTRACT

THE USE OF CUES OR PROMPTS TO SUPPORT TAKING MEDICATION AS PRESCRIBED IN COMMUNITY DWELLING ELDERLY

Mary Kay Mortimer PhD, RN UNC-CH Post Doctoral Fellow

Joan C. Rogers, Ph.D., OTR/L, FAOTA

Professor and Department Chair Occupational Therapy

University of Pittsburgh

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PURPOSE: The purpose of this study was to assess the use of environmental prompts used by this sample of older community dwelling individuals with a mean Folstein Mini-Mental Status Exam of 27 (Range 23-30, SD = 1.94), to support their daily medication taking behaviors. Prompts are contextual cues that have been placed in a cognitive schema that helps a person remember to take medications. **METHOD:** A descriptive, cross-sectional, and correlation method was used to identify those prompts used most often as well as those prompts that may be most closely associated to medication adherence as measured by medication electronic monitors (MEMs caps by AARDEX, Zug Switzerland). **FINDINGS:** Individuals were invited to participate in this descriptive study from various senior citizen activities in the Ohio Valley region of the U.S. One-hundred and one subjects were screened and consented and 71 subjects answered the questions on prompts and cues. These individuals between the ages of 63 and 94 years ($M = 73.5$, $SD = 6.98$), were typically female (83.1%), Caucasian (84.15%), had 12.66 years of education, were retired (75.24%), and had an income of = \$20,000 (58.41%). Most of the participants had health insurance coverage (99%); however, only 71.2% had insurance coverage for medication. Those over 62 may have age associated attentional declines, and report the use of prompts to assist in taking medications as prescribed in self-management settings. A list of possible prompts were gathered from the literature and from individual reports which included: meals, getting dressed in the morning, getting ready for bed, brushing teeth, the sight of the medication bottle or organizer, an alarm, a TV show, a phone call, another person, medication self-report diaries or calendars, and "none of these remind me--its just a habit". The most frequently used prompts were meals (49%), and the sight of the medication bottle or organizer (42.6%). Individuals with adherence over 80% level, considered adequate for most medications, used about two (2.28) prompts, while those with adherence < 80% level used three prompts to support their adherence. Medication adherence rates are significantly correlated to "Total number of prompts" (Kendall's Tau $b = .19$, $p = .04$) and "use of diary" (Kendall's Tau $b = .257$, $p = .002$). **DISCUSSION:** Individuals of all memory abilities as well as all adherence levels presented various prompts and evidence of adaptation in their natural environments. However, those who have set up more prompts evidenced lower levels of medication adherence. More investigation is needed in the lower levels of adherence since even an increased effort did not improve adherence adequately for some.