Medicare, for example, could medicines as interventions to improve our understanding of best practices and awareness on medication adherence. A gap. A mean no single solution will close the adherence barriers that result in medication nonadherence.

The variety – more prescription drugs is likely nonadherence is associated with high cholesterol. Failure to pick up their medications within one to two weeks of receiving the prescription from their doctors is likely to have adverse health events that incur additional costs to them and the health care system. These individuals do so with serious consequences to their health. Nonadherent patients are more likely than their medication adherent counterparts to have adverse health events that incur additional costs to them and the health care system. Unfortunately, the problem of medication nonadherence is likely to grow, particularly as the population ages and more individuals are prescribed prescription drugs. Currently, approximately 90% of adults over the age of 65 take prescription drugs, with 65% taking three or more prescription drugs, and the number of older Americans is expected to double by 2040.

The variety – and potential combination – of barriers that result in medication nonadherence mean no single solution will close the adherence gap. Additional research, education, and awareness on medication adherence can increase our understanding of best practices and interventions that ensure patients take their medicines as prescribed. But policy changes in Medicare, for example, could also help improve medication adherence for this important patient group. Improving medication adherence, therefore, will require a multifaceted approach.

**IMPACT OF MEDICATION NONADHERENCE**

The prevalence of medication nonadherence is difficult to assess since no one measure captures the total picture. It is known, however, that when individuals do not take their medications as prescribed, they face greater health risks and worse health outcomes.

- Medication nonadherence results in approximately 125,000 preventable deaths a year.1
- 46,000 deaths may be avoided each year if 70% of patients with hypertension got the treatment they need.7
- The risk of suffering from myocardial infarction and stroke among nonadherent hypertension patients is more than two times higher compared to hypertension patients who adhere to taking their medicine. Additionally, the risk of hospitalization for coronary heart failure among these patients is almost three times higher compared to their adherent counterparts.8
- Patients with acute coronary syndrome who do not adhere to their medications have a 3 times greater likelihood of death compared to patients who adhere to their prescriptions.9
- Poor adherence to heart failure drugs is associated with an increased number of cardiovascular-related emergency department visits and inpatient hospital days.4

In addition to the health impact, medication nonadherence results in increased health care costs for individuals and a health care system already under stress.

- Up to $300 billion in avoidable costs is spent annually on medication nonadherence, which represents approximately 10% of all healthcare costs in the U.S.10
- Health care costs associated with mismanaged multiple medications by seniors was estimated to be $1.3 billion in 2012. $1.1 billion of that money was spent on inpatient treatment and the rest on emergency room and outpatient visits.11
Hypertension Annual total health adherence.

innovative approaches to help improve medication adherence. The American Heart Association is committed to advocating for the importance of medication adherence in order to identify, address, and overcome adherence barriers.

Advocate for Medication Adherence

- Advance research to understand how different medication adherence interventions affect health outcomes and which combinations of approaches are the most successful.
- Advance our understanding of the link between medication adherence, patient healthcare spending and healthcare costs.
- Promote greater awareness among patients and healthcare providers about the importance of medication adherence interventions affect health outcomes and which combinations of approaches are the most successful.
- Promote greater awareness among patients and healthcare providers about the importance of medication adherence interventions affect health outcomes and which combinations of approaches are the most successful.
- Establish uniform quality measures of medication adherence.
- Provide incentives for medication adherence through delivery system reform.
- Ensure medication adherence is included as a component of quality improvement activities.
- Help enact the Medication Therapy Management Empowerment Act of 2015 (S. 776), a bill that would expand the number of Medicare beneficiaries eligible for medication therapy management programs.

Impact of Medication Adherence on Health Care Spending Per Person

Impact of Medication Adherence on Health Care Spending Per Person

BARRIERS TO MEDICATION ADHERENCE

There are a number of reasons why a patient may not take medications as prescribed, and often it may be a combination of factors. Some causes of medication nonadherence include:

- Fragmentation across the health care system, which can limit care coordination or make it difficult for physicians to easily access patient information across different care settings.
- The complexity of the drug therapies, which may lead to a patient’s perceived fear of side effects from the medication(s) or general confusion about the regimen.
- Poor communication between a provider and a patient about the medications, or difficulty explaining and understanding the benefits and adverse effects of complex drug therapies.
- Unintentional patient behavioral factors, such as forgetfulness.
- Patients’ physical or cognitive impairments.
- Socioeconomic factors, such as low health literacy, and high medication costs, as well as lack of transportation to fill prescriptions at a pharmacy.

THE ASSOCIATION ADVOCATES

The American Heart Association/American Stroke Association is committed to advocating for innovative approaches to help improve medication adherence. This includes approaches that would:

- Provide incentives for medication adherence through delivery system reform.
- Ensure medication adherence is included as a component of quality improvement activities.
- Help enact the Medication Therapy Management Empowerment Act of 2015 (S. 776), a bill that would expand the number of Medicare beneficiaries eligible for medication therapy management programs.