Factors Influencing Oral Adherence: Qualitative Metasummary and Triangulation With Quantitative Evidence

Margaret Irwin, PhD, RN, MN, and Lee Ann Johnson, MSN, RN

Background: Concern about adherence to oral agents among patients with cancer has grown as more oral agents are being used for cancer treatment. Knowledge of common factors that facilitate or inhibit adherence to oral medication regimens can be beneficial to clinicians in identifying patients at risk for nonadherence, in planning care to address barriers to adherence, and in educating patients about ways to improve adherence.

Objectives: The focus of this review is to synthesize the evidence about factors that influence adherence and identify implications for practice.

Methods: Literature was searched via PubMed and CINAHL®. Evidence regarding factors influencing adherence was synthesized using a metasummary of qualitative research and triangulated with findings from quantitative research.

Findings: Forty-four factors influencing adherence were identified from 159 research studies of patients with and without cancer. Factors associated with adherence in oncology and non-oncology cases included provider relations, side effects, forgetfulness, beliefs about medication necessity, establishing routines for taking medication, social support, ability to fit medications in lifestyle, cost, and medication knowledge. Among patients with cancer, depression and negative expectations of results also were shown to have a negative relationship to adherence.