LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Medication Reconciliation: Seeing the Big Picture

The following letters are in response to an article by Nancy Greengold, MD, MBA, entitled “Medication Reconciliation Meets Patient Safety: Irreconcilable Differences?” Her article appeared in the April 2007 issue of P&T.

Dr. Greengold:

Thank you for writing such an eloquent article in the April issue of P&T. As a pharmacist involved in medication reconciliation daily, I am well aware of the pitfalls associated with creating an accurate list of patient medications. As you indicated, we may be reconciling garbage for the sake of being compliant with a standard rather than improving patient safety.

It is frustrating in dealing daily with patients who do not even know the name of the pharmacy where they get their medications, let alone what they are taking. Too often, the lists that patients supposedly update regularly are woefully incorrect and often create more problems than they solve.

My wish is that regulatory agencies, such as JCAHO [Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations], look at the “big picture” in patient safety and [examine] how these directives [affect] the health care system. I would rather spend my time educating patients on proper medication use and compliance issues instead of chasing down medications they are on.

I will be sharing your article with my colleagues so that we may at least look at how medication reconciliation might be used to improve patient care. I agree that the burden is on all of us. Again, thank you for the thoughtful insights.

Gary Gonza, RPh
Syracuse, New York

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Dear Dr. Greengold:

Enjoyed your article on medication reconciliation. We all got a kick out of your humor here. We all tend to not see the forest for the trees on these standards.

Joe Jeffries, RPh
Pharmacy Director
Barnesville Hospital Association
Barnesville, Ohio

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Dr. Greengold,

It was a pleasure reading your commentary. As clinicians, we must fight the natural tendency to slip into a task-oriented mindset.

Hopefully, the regulations that have been put in place will have the effect of bringing these problems into the spotlight—an important first step so that real solutions can be achieved.

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