

Increasing the Impact of Direct-to-Patient Programs

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As brand teams create strategic plans for 2011, many will include programs that reach out to patients directly through tactics such as Websites, co-pay assistance cards, and patient resource kits. Direct-to-patient (DTP) programs make sense for brand teams who have overcome the first hurdle — getting practitioners to prescribe their drug. Their next challenge — and perhaps the more difficult to overcome — is ensuring that the ultimate consumers of their drug, the patients, fill prescriptions and adhere to therapy as recommended.

There's a direct correlation between DTP program success and how meaningful the message is to the audience. The more relevant the message is to the patient's condition, lifestyle, and needs, the more influential it will be. The programs that are employed, the messages they convey, and how the information is presented all need to be centered around who the patients are and what unmet needs they have.

Through the use of de-identified patient data, more can be learned about patients than ever before. Patient-level data tracks patients as they travel through the Continuum of Care® at physician offices, pharmacies, hospitals, labs, and retail stores. This provides unprecedented insights into what influences patient behavior, including such things as past events, paths of therapy, and where therapy was initiated.

In addition to being used to monitor patient behaviors and actions, patient-level healthcare information is being combined with demographic, psychographic, and media-preference data collected from third parties. Information about lifestyle and other personal characteristics helps marketers understand more about who their patients are and allows them to tailor messages to be most relevant.

What patient information might change a DTP message or program?

Past Events

If a brand team is trying to improve adherence through patient education, it can take into account a patient's history and the associated motivation to stay on therapy. For instance, a patient who suffered a life-threatening event and began therapy in a hospital may be more motivated to stay on therapy to prevent future events. A patient who was prescribed therapy because of risk factors, on the other hand, may ben-

efit more from an education program that explains the possible hazards of stopping therapy.

Ability to Pay

Not all patients on the same managed care plan or with the same co-payment amount behave similarly. Patients with limited income, less wealth, or a lower ability to pay may be more likely to reject a prescription based on the out-of-pocket cost. Instead of launching a wide-reaching co-pay assistance program, a brand team may do better reaching out to those who would be most positively affected by the assistance.

Nonprescription Product Purchases

For markets in which there are over-the-counter alternatives or consumer packaged good complements, it's especially important for brand teams to know what patients are purchasing. Because of cost or other factors, patients sometimes discontinue a prescription product and replace it with an OTC medicine. Although not adherent on their prescription medication, these patients are taking a drug that treats their condition and therefore would not likely be responsive to an adherence message. Instead, the brand team needs to address what has caused them to switch to the OTC product.

Diagnosis and Severity

For drugs that have multiple indications and that are used to treat a variety of conditions, focused messages can be created to address how a product improves patient lifestyles or health for each of these conditions differently. For example, antipsychotic marketers would want to present a different message to patients with bipolar disorder than to patients suffering from schizophrenia. Likewise, marketers can create messages around the severity of symptoms within a condition, which can also vary.

Ensuring that patients fill prescriptions and adhere to therapy as recommended is challenging, but creating DTP programs that address the unmet needs of patients offers the best hope of reaching them. De-identified patient data offers unprecedented insights about patients and, ultimately, helps marketers reach the right patients with relevant messages. ■

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