

Enhancing medication adherence in oncology by leveraging digital channels for medication refills at a specialty pharmacy

Brittney Lager, PharmD, FMNM, ABAHP, CSP | Rachel Wiechert, PharmD, BSN, RN, CSP | Robert Allender, MS | Thomas Pouliot

Background

Cancer remains a leading cause of death globally, accounting for nearly 10 million deaths in 2022 [1]. Despite significant developments in the therapeutic and comprehensive management of cancers, medication adherence is still a concern. Failure to adhere to cancer medications may lead to unfavorable outcomes, contributing to increased morbidity and mortality [2]. Completing the treatment protocol as prescribed is crucial to attain the anticipated therapeutic outcome. As specialty pharmacy use becomes more widespread in oncology, particularly with the growing availability of targeted oral oncolytic therapies, understanding best practices to improve medication adherence becomes essential. The impact of medication refill options on adherence is not fully understood. AcariaHealth Specialty Pharmacy offers three primary refill channels — phone, online portal, and text messaging.

Objective

This study aims to examine how refill channels impact medication adherence among patients receiving oncology medications.

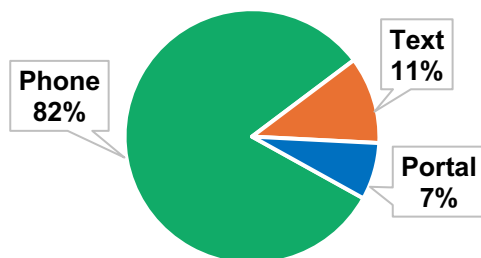
Methods

This is a retrospective review of adherence using the PDC formula across three refill channels for prescriptions filled between 4/1/23 and 3/31/24. Patients who received an oncology medication from AcariaHealth during this period were included. Patients were categorized according to the refill method utilized as phone, portal, or text for each refill. PDC rates for phone compared to portal and text were analyzed for significant differences ($p < 0.05$) using two-sample t-tests.

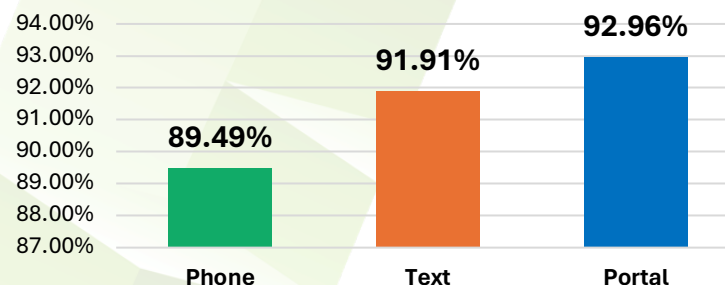
Results

The analysis included 5,259 patients (mean age 53.66 ± 17.51 ; 51.68% male) with 4,311, 381, and 567 refills among phone, portal, and text channels, respectively. Mean PDC adherence rate comparison findings between telephonic and digital (portal and text) refill channels were 89.49% phone, 92.96% portal ($p < 0.05$), and 91.91% text ($p < 0.05$).

Patient Volume by Refill Channel



Average PDC by Refill Channel



Conclusion

Based on the standard benchmark of $PDC > 80\%$, our results reveal high adherence rates across all refill channels, with digital channels demonstrating a statistically significant increase compared to phone. This highlights the importance of offering various refill options to simplify therapy management for patients and caregivers. This study underscores the role of technology in improving medication adherence and health outcomes for oncology patients. Further research should focus on strategies to encourage initial patient enrollment in digital channels, enabling more thorough comparisons among groups of similar sizes.

VISIT US ONLINE

AcariaHealth.com

 @AcariaHealth

©2024 AcariaHealth. All rights reserved. 8_2408

References:

- [1] Ferlay J, Ervik M, Lam F, Laversanne M, Colombet M, Mery L, Piñeros M, Znaor A, Soerjomataram I, Bray F (2024). Global Cancer Observatory: Cancer Today. Lyon, France: International Agency for Research on Cancer. Available from: <https://gco.iarc.who.int/today>, accessed [17 May 2024].
- [2] V R, Chacko AM, Abdulla N, Annamalai M, Kandi V. Medication Adherence in Cancer Patients: A Comprehensive Review. Cureus. 2024 Jan 22;16(1):e52721. doi: 10.7759/cureus.52721. PMID: 38384629; PMCID: PMC10880514.