

Medication Adherence in Oncology

Cancer treatment is complex and requires a multifaceted approach with healthcare providers and family playing a crucial role. While cancer mortality has significantly dropped over time, nonadherence remains a problem—particularly among people taking oral oncolytics. Motivated patients are more likely to have better adherence and outcomes.

Cancer by the Numbers

Since its peak in 1991, cancer mortality in the U.S. has dropped 33% ¹	Cancer incidence is on the rise for many common cancers ²	The number of people ages 50 to 64 with cancer is growing ²
New cases of cancer in the US are expected to exceed 2 million in 2024 for the first time ²	People taking oral cancer medications are reported to have lower adherence —as low as 16%—compared with infusion therapies ³	The global oral cancer treatment market is projected to grow more than 26% , from \$2.5B in 2023 to \$3.2B by 2029 ⁴

Reasons for Nonadherence



Nonadherence is much higher for people taking oral oncolytics compared to infusion medications³

Substantial behavior change required	Patient health beliefs about medication
Inconvenient or insufficient healthcare facilities	Inadequate social support
Inadequate supervision	History of nonadherence
Poor communication with healthcare providers	History of mental illness
Patient dissatisfaction with care	Complex treatment regimens

Factors for Improved Motivation and Adherence

HCPs such as Clinical Nurse Educators and Nurse Navigators provide holistic support for patients taking oncology medications:



- Establish relationship with patient built on trust, cooperation, and respect
- Ensure patient is adequately informed and knowledgeable about diagnosis and treatment at time of prescription and throughout therapy journey
- Address emotional concerns such as stress and feelings of hopelessness
- Deliver regular follow-ups to combat forgetfulness and administration errors
- Provide feedback loop to healthcare providers
- Identify avenues for support from friends, family, advocacy organizations
- Supply digital tools to track medication, questions, and side effects

Impact of Nurse Navigators in the Oncology Space

A complex area like oncology—and the specialty medication needed to treat it—requires increased support due to the significant barriers patients face when starting and managing these therapies.

VMS support programs demonstrate impactful post-program survey results⁵:

43% INCREASE in HCP confidence to share oncology resources and support solutions with patients

192% INCREASE in knowledge about oncology therapy

97% OF HCPs rated the knowledge and expertise of the oncology Nurse Navigator as excellent or very good



1. Penn Medicine. 2. American Cancer Society. 3. US Pharmacist. 4. Global Market Stats and Figures. 5. VMS data on file. 6. NIH.