

Delay of Care – Prescriptions

DESCRIPTION

Research estimates that three out of four Americans do not take their medication as directed. This can have dangerous, sometimes deadly consequences. For example, not keeping high blood pressure controlled could lead to a heart attack or stroke. Every year, poor medication adherence takes the lives of 125,000 Americans, and costs the health care system nearly \$300 billion in additional doctor visits, emergency department visits and hospitalizations. There are several reasons why people may not take medication as prescribed: they may forget, be fearful, lack understanding, question effectiveness or for many, the cost is not affordable.¹

HOW WE ARE DOING

In 2014, about 3.5 percent of Americans were unable to obtain or were delayed in obtaining necessary prescription medicines, which does not meet the Healthy People goal.² In Ramsey County in 2014, among adults 25 years or older that take prescription medications, about 10 percent could not afford their prescriptions.³ These two data points are not comparable.

BENCHMARK INDICATOR

Healthy People 2020: Reduce the proportion of persons who are unable to obtain or delay in obtaining necessary prescription medicines.²
U.S. Target: 2.8 percent.

DISPARITIES

People with lower incomes report being unable to afford prescription medications at significantly higher rates than higher income groups. In the Metro area, 23.8 percent of adults with lower income (<200 percent poverty) had medicine use delays because of cost, compared to 6.9 percent of adults with higher income (>200 percent poverty).⁴ There are also racial and ethnic differences related to delaying medicine use. Research points to two aspects that affect prescription drug use: access and amount used. Research shows that African-American and Hispanic individuals have the highest rates of not being able to get prescription drugs. This could be due to lack of access to a provider to prescribe drugs, or the inability to afford prescriptions.⁵

RISK FACTORS

Being able to take medicine as prescribed (adherence) is a complex process impacted by five sets of factors:

- Social/ economic factors (e.g., insurance coverage, medication cost, language proficiency, literacy)
- Provider-patient/ health care system factors (e.g., high drug costs, communication, education materials)
- Condition-related factors (e.g., severity, chronic, lack of symptoms, depression, disability)
- Therapy-related factors (e.g., side effects, duration, complexity, lifestyle changes, social stigma)
- (continued on back)

Information to note

- In Ramsey County in 2014, among adults 25 years or older that take prescription medications, about 10 percent could not afford their prescriptions.
- In the Metro area, 23.8% of adults with lower incomes (<200% poverty) had medicine use delays because of cost, compared to 6.9 percent of adults with higher incomes (>200% poverty).

Community voice

“Language barrier, taking too much medications and no support.”
- Oromo Female, age 35-44

Out of 91 mentions of medication, 25 (27.4%) cited language, economic and social barriers.

¹American Heart Association. Medication Adherence – Taking your meds as directed. http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/More/ConsumerHealthCare/Medication-Adherence---Taking-Your-Meds-as-Directed_UCM_453329_Article.jsp#.Wzuel5VX6Uk. Accessed June 2018.

²Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Healthy People 2020. <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/Access-to-Health-Services/objectives>. Accessed June 2018.

³Saint Paul – Ramsey County Public Health. Metro SHAPE Ramsey County Data Book 2014. <https://www.ramseycounty.us/your-government/open-government/research-data/public-health-data>. Accessed July 2018.

⁴Metro Public Health Analyst Network. Metro SHAPE Six County Data Book 2014. <https://www.ramseycounty.us/your-government/open-government/research-data/public-health-data>. Accessed July 2018.

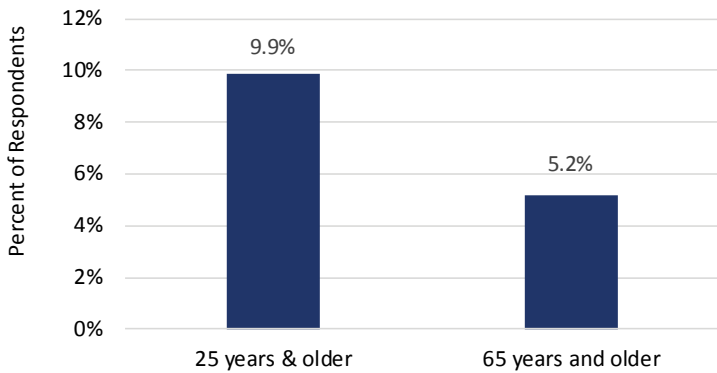
⁵Wang T, Shi L, Nie X, Zhu J. Race/Ethnicity, insurance, income and access to care: the influence of health status. *International Journal for Equity in Health*. 2013; 12:29. <https://equityhealthj.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1475-9276-12-29>. Published May 11, 2013. Accessed July 2018.

- Patient-related factors (e.g., disabilities, perceived risk and benefit, fear, stress, expectations, motivation)⁶

WHAT RAMSEY COUNTY GOVERNMENT IS DOING

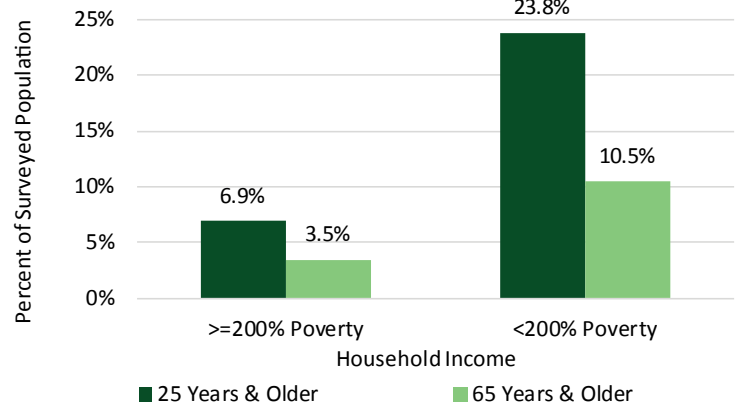
Prescription medication can be a very expensive component to health care. To increase options to access affordable prescription medication, Ramsey County makes low-cost prescription program enrollment information available at various Ramsey County sites and provides information to clients receiving services.

Delay of Medicine Use Due to Affordability by Age Group, Six County Metro, 2014



Source: Metro Public Health Analyst Network, Metro SHAPE Six County Data.⁷

Delay of Medicine Use Due to Affordability by Income, Six County Metro, 2014



Source: Metro Public Health Analyst Network. Metro SHAPE Six County Data Book.⁸

⁶ World Health Organization. Overview of Medication Adherence. Where Are We Today? http://adultmedication.com/OverviewofMedicationAdherence_4.html. Accessed July 2018.

⁷ Metro Public Health Analyst Network. Metro SHAPE Six County Data Book. 2014; <https://www.ramseycounty.us/your-government/open-government/research-data/public-health-data>. Accessed August 15, 2017.

⁸ Source: Metro Public Health Analyst Network. Metro SHAPE Six County Data Book 2014. <https://www.ramseycounty.us/your-government/open-government/research-data/public-health-data>. Accessed July 2018.