

## Medication Compliance, Side Effects and Related Issues

**Psychotropic Medication Prescription:** The proportion of consumers currently prescribed psychotropic medication was 86% according to the consumers' self-report and 85% according to their case managers.

- The two reports agreed 91% of the time. Most of the disagreement resulted from cases where consumers indicated they were prescribed psychotropic medications while their case managers said that none were prescribed.

**Medication Compliance:** Consumers were asked how often they took their medication as prescribed (always, sometimes, or never). Case managers were also asked to give this same information about their clients.

- According to consumer self-reports:
  - 88% always took their medication as prescribed,
  - 11% sometimes took their medication as prescribed, and
  - 1% never took their medication as prescribed.
- According to case manager reports about consumers:
  - 75% always took their medication as prescribed,
  - 25% sometimes took their medication as prescribed, and
  - 1% never took their medication as prescribed.
- The two reports of medication compliance agreed 80% of the time. Disagreement primarily resulted from consumers reporting greater medication compliance than their case managers.
- *Longitudinal Results:* According to case manager reports, the proportion of consumers who always took their medications increased from approximately 65% (1991, 1992, 1993) to 75% in 1995. There was no change in consumer self-reports of medication compliance over all periods covered by LCO/SIS.

**Side Effects:** Consumers were asked to rate how much they had been bothered by the side effects of their medications.

- 46% reported not being bothered at all,
- 23% reported being bothered a little bit,
- 9% reported being bothered moderately,
- 16% reported being bothered quite a bit, and
- 6% reported being extremely bothered.
- Side effects perceived by the consumers were not related significantly to ratings of expected side effects provided by two Ph.D., RNs (an advance practice psychiatric mental health nurse and a certified family nurse practitioner).<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> The LCO staff greatly appreciates the efforts of Barbara Jones Warren, Ph.D. and Wilma Lutz, Ph.D. in rating the expected side effects.

### **Medication Compliance and Side Effects:**

- Consumer and case manager reports of medication compliance were significantly related to consumers' perceptions of the side effects. Those consumers more bothered by the side effects were less likely to take their medication as prescribed (gamma = .41,  $p < .004$ ).
- No significant relationship was found between medication compliance, as assessed by self-report or case manager report, and the expected side effects ratings provided by psychiatric professionals.

**Medication Compliance and Information Provided to the Consumer:** The extent to which information about their medication was provided to consumers was significantly related to medication compliance. Though the causal nature of this relationship could not be determined in the current study, those consumers who reported that someone had explained why their medications had been prescribed were more likely to report taking their medications as prescribed (gamma = .55,  $p = .022$ ).

- 84% of consumers reported that someone had explained why their medications had been prescribed.
- 76% reported that someone had explained the possible side effects of these medications.
- *Age Differences:* The older the consumer, the less likely it was that the side effects of the medication had been explained to the consumer (Pearson's Chi Squared = 8.42,  $p < .04$ ).

**Medication Compliance and Fear of Medications:** Consumers who reported having been afraid to take their medications in the past year demonstrated significantly lower medication compliance by case manager report than those who did not report having been afraid (gamma = .45,  $p = .013$ ).

- 22% (63 consumers) reported having been afraid to take their medications in the past year.
- Reasons why consumers were afraid to take their prescribed medications included side effects, fear of becoming addicted and lack of information concerning why the medications were prescribed.

### **Items Relating to Perceived Side Effects:**

- Consumers who reported that someone had explained why their medications had been prescribed were less likely to report being bothered by the side effects (gamma = .27,  $p = .037$ ).
- Consumers were also less likely to report being bothered by side effects if someone had explained the side effects of their medications to them (gamma = -.28,  $p = .015$ ).
- Consumers who reported having been afraid to take medications were more likely to report having been bothered by side effects (gamma = -.26,  $p = .017$ ).

**Involvement in Medication Decisions:** Consumers were asked how involved they were in decisions about their medication.

37% reported they were not at all involved in medication decisions,  
18% reported they were a little bit involved in medication decisions,  
16% reported they were moderately involved in medication decisions,  
21% reported that they were quite a bit involved in medication decisions, and  
9% reported they that were extremely involved in medication decisions.

- *Diagnostic Differences:* Those consumers with a primary diagnosis of schizophrenia reported a lower level of involvement in decisions about their medications than consumers with affective or personality disorders. Consumers with anxiety disorders reported less involvement in medication decisions than those with personality disorders (MWW,  $p < .04$ ).

**Importance of Involvement in Medication Decisions:** Consumers were also asked how important it was to be involved in decisions about their medication.

19% reported it was not at all important that they be involved in medication decisions,  
6% reported it was a little bit important that they be involved in medication decisions,  
10% reported it was moderately important that they be involved in medication decisions,  
33% reported it was quite important that they be involved in medication decisions, and  
33% reported it was extremely important that they be involved in medication decisions.

- The majority of consumers indicated that it was quite a bit or extremely important to be involved, but most reported being not at all or only a little bit involved. Many of the consumers (38%) who said that it was extremely important to be involved in medication decisions reported that they were not at all or only a little bit involved in those decisions.
- *Diagnostic Differences:* Those consumers with affective disorders reported that it was more important to be involved in medication decisions than those with schizophrenia. Consumers with anxiety disorders rated involvement in medication decisions as less important than consumers with affective disorders, personality disorders, or schizophrenia (MWW,  $p < .05$ ).

## **Conclusions:**

*Medication Compliance:* Greater medication compliance was shown to be associated with lower perceived side effects, greater amounts of information concerning why the medications were prescribed, and not having been afraid of taking the medications.

*Perceived Side Effects:* Lower consumer ratings of perceived side effects were shown to be associated with having had the reasons for taking the medications explained and having had the side effects of the medications explained.

*Involvement in Medication Decisions:* A significant number of consumers are not as involved in decisions about their medication as they would like to be. While the majority of consumers felt that it was quite a bit or extremely important to be involved, a majority also reported being not at all or only a little bit involved.