

The ESPACOMP and its role in promoting knowledge and competencies in the matter of patient adherence

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Received: 29 October 2013 / Accepted: 30 October 2013 / Published online: 30 November 2013
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This commentary in the special issue of *International Journal of Clinical Pharmacy* devoted to patient adherence is a great opportunity to present the European Society for Patient Adherence, COMpliance and Persistence (ESPACOMP). It is a non-profit association, ‘established to promote the science concerned with the assessment of what patients do with medicines they have been prescribed’ (see www.espacomp.eu).

As described on the website, since 1996, a group of scientists from Belgium and The Netherlands used to organise the “Lowlands” symposium. They shared their research on patient compliance and persistence with prescribed therapy. This symposium has grown over the years, reflecting the increased interest for adherence related issues across Europe. In 2009, the European Society for Patient Adherence, Compliance and Persistence was founded.

The annual European ESPACOMP symposium has become a networking place for an increasing number of international adherence researchers, pharmacoepidemiologists, statisticians,

physicians, pharmacists, nurses, psychologists as well as other interested healthcare providers, anthropologists, economists, policy makers and industry. Such an interdisciplinary symposium facilitates exchange of ideas across professional and regional boundaries.

A wide range of topics are regularly debated at the annual symposium, with the aim of increasing and disseminating important knowledge and competences within the adherence area. Main topics are described below:

- Patient adherence and policies
- Adherence definitions and taxonomy
- Measurements and monitoring methods
- Patient adherence and drug development, in pre- and post-registration studies
- Multifactorial and multilevel determinants of patient adherence
- Health psychology and patient adherence
- Consequences of non adherence (clinical, economic, individual, societal)
- Efficacy and effectiveness of medication adherence interventions (e.g. practical, cognitive and behavioural)
- Innovative technologies (e.g. eHealth) to support medication adherence
- Research translation into clinical practice
- Advance in analytical and statistical knowledge
- Ethical considerations

Moreover, in order to increase professional education, analytical competencies and effective translation of research into practice, the ESPACOMP organizes every year an educational pre-conference day. The symposium also encourages junior researchers to present and discuss their results during poster sessions and oral communications.

The ESPACOMP aims to strengthen connections to other professional and scientific societies, or scientific

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projects in order to disseminate knowledge. To note, several founding members of ESPACOMP were involved in the European ABC project (www.abcproject.eu), which revisited the adherence taxonomy and reviewed determinants of medication adherence [1, 2]. It also endorsed a meta-analysis on adherence-enhancing interventions through electronically compiled drug dosing histories, published a review on an educational framework for managing and supporting medication adherence in Europe and developed practical consensus-based policy solutions [3–5].

Patient adherence has been a health issue for many chronic patients since long. Due to its multi-factorial and multi-level determinants, patient adherence issues have to be addressed by a wide range of stakeholders from drug development and science areas, to healthcare systems politicians and, professional educators and providers. Alongside with other carers, pharmacists are part of this venture in order to ensure effective, safe and efficient use of medicine in community care. New challenges have arisen with the breakthrough of more targeted but also expensive drugs, within a healthcare environment of cost containment. To improve adherence and persistence, also for newer therapies, high quality research, appropriate education and robust interventions are necessary.

Ten years ago, the World health Organization reported that healthcare systems have to evolve from acute to chronic oriented-care in order to address non adherence and non persistence more efficiently [6]. We are not there

yet, but ESPACOMP among other scientific, professional and political initiatives will help disseminate needed knowledge and competencies.

Funding None.

Conflicts of interest Authors are effective members of ESPACOMP.

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