

Patient Oriented Medication Tools - Best Practice User's Guide

This set of tools contains three components:

- (1) A **Medication Whiteboard** to use while the patient is in hospital;
- (2) A **Patient Oriented Medication List** to review with the patient and family before going home. This is a companion to your PODS if there is no medication list included, or as an addition for patients with more complex medication needs.
- (3) A **Blister Pack Insert** to ensure consistency between the medication routine developed in hospital and the medication routine to be followed at home.

The purpose of the patient oriented medication tools are to work together with patients and families to develop their medication routine and to provide them with the appropriate information in an accessible format to manage their medications at home after discharge. In all cases, consider the patient and family situation related to communication, various disabilities, finance, employment, and other supportive needs when providing instructions. See the resources section of the online PODS toolkit (<http://pods-toolkit.uhnopenlab.ca/>) for helpful tips that were created together with patients and families. All of the tools described here were designed together with patients, families, and pharmacists in hospital and community settings.

Tool 1 - Medication Whiteboard

The Medication Whiteboard was designed to be used while the patient is in hospital to promote patient and family involvement in the creation of a medication routine. It can also be used in other care settings, such as homecare, where there is a medication routine.

Content Considerations

There are five sections of content included in the Medication Whiteboard. All these sections should be completed through discussion with the patient and family.

Medication: This section should include a name and description of the medication in order to educate the patient and family on what the medication is called (e.g. generic or brand name), what the medication looks like (e.g. a red tablet or a spray or liquid), and how much of the medication they need to take (e.g. two 500mg tablets).

For What? This section should explain why the patient needs to take each medication, as understanding why each medication is taken has been proven to result in improvement in medication management and overall treatment adherence.

How to Take: This section should provide information on how to take each medication. This includes information such as whether it needs to be taken with or without food, whether taking it together with specific medications or foods should be avoided, and helpful tips specific to that patient and family (e.g. preferences to take the medication mixed into certain foods or while being distracted with music or a television show).

Watch For: This section should provide information on side effects connected to specific medications that the patient should watch for and then discuss with their healthcare team. Sometimes changes to medications or the timing of when medications are taken can help mitigate certain side effects.

How My Community Pharmacist Can Help: This section should provide information on how the community pharmacist can help once the patient returns home. Information here can include having medications put into blister packs or easy-to-open pill bottles, as well as specific information that the hospital pharmacist may have related to conversations they have had with the patient's pharmacist in the community.

Design Considerations

The Medication Whiteboard includes several design features to help encourage use as well as involvement of the patient and family in creating their medication plan.

Clear Sections: The content sections are clearly defined and easy to understand.

Symbols for Time of Day: The symbols are helpful for patients and families to picture their daily routine and how medications fit in.

Time: Under each symbol for the time of day is a line for the patient and family to note the specific time they will be taking their medication, helping them establish a daily medications routine. For example, some patients will choose to take their first dose of medication at 8:00 am and others at 9:00 am. Having the ability to add specific times that fit within their specific daily routine is helpful for patients.

Magnetic Symbols: Magnets with icons depicting specific types of medications, such as whether their medications are pills or injections; body parts, to help understand why medications are taken or what side effects they might cause; and tips for how to take their medications can be adhered to the board as visual reminders for patients and families.. These magnets were co-designed with patients who have developmental disabilities and are meant to help in the education process, specifically for anyone with limited health literacy or language and communication barriers.

Notes: The addition of the notes section gives the patient and family a place to write down questions that they have or anything they wish to discuss with the healthcare provider.

Process Considerations:

The Medication Whiteboard is meant to support process elements identified as important for communication and education about medications for patients and families. Core process considerations for all PODS-related tools include (1) **involving the patient and family**, (2) **using conversation techniques such as teach back**, and (3) **involving interpreters when applicable**. In addition to the core process considerations, the Medication Whiteboard also supports the following:

1. Include the Patient and Family in Creating a Medication Routine

Every person is unique and has a daily routine that may involve going to work or certain times when family or caregivers are around to help them. These factors can be critically important in creating a medication routine that fits into a person's life, a factor that was highlighted as critically important in helping patients and families manage their medications at home. The Medication Whiteboard is meant primarily as a tool to support involvement of the patient and family together with their healthcare team in creating a medication routine that works for them, can be started in hospital, and then continued at home.

2. Beginning Education Before the Day of Discharge

Often patients and families do not have a lot of time to absorb their discharge instructions or ask questions related to those instructions. Using the Medication Whiteboard throughout the hospital stay allows for ongoing communication and education and results in patients and families feeling more prepared.

Tool 2 - Patient Oriented Medication List

The Patient Oriented Medication List should be reviewed with the patient and family before going home. This is a nice companion to your PODS if there is no medication list included on the PODS, or in addition for patients with more complex medication needs. Similar to PODS, the content, design, and process guidelines listed below can be used to adapt the patient oriented medication list to your own patient and process contexts.

Content Considerations

Information for the Day of Discharge: It is important to provide information on the medication list that impacts its use for patients and families on the day of discharge from hospital. Useful information includes the **date of discharge/date the form was completed** and reviewed, what **medications the patient has already had that day** while in hospital, and **whether a prescription has been ordered** from the pharmacy.

Where to go: Include information on who the patient and family can **contact if they have questions** about their medications and **where they should go to pick up their prescriptions**. It is helpful to include information on **how the community pharmacist can help**. This may include having medications put into blister packs or easy-to-open pill bottles, as well as specific information that the hospital pharmacist may have related to conversations they have had with the patient's pharmacist in the community. The patient should be encouraged to take the medication list with them when they go to the community pharmacist to get their prescriptions.

A sample teach back question for this section is: Can you explain to me how your community pharmacist will be helping you?

Medications I am Taking Now: Provide patients with a list of medications that they need to take when they get home. This list should include any new and previous medications that they should continue taking (that may or may not have changed). Make sure they know what the medication is called in a way that makes sense to them (e.g. brand or generic name as well as a description of the colour or type of drug), the reasons for each medication (condition and symptom it treats, and what it should accomplish), how much of each medication to take, when and how frequently to take each medication, and side effects to watch for. Also include relevant details related to how medications should be taken, such as if it is time sensitive and whether to take with food or on an empty stomach. When going through this section, talk to the patient about any difficulties they may have with medications, such as affordability or accessibility, and make adjustments or refer them to appropriate services that can help.

A sample teach back question for this section is: Can you explain to me when and how you will take this medicine? Can you demonstrate for me how to use the puffer?

Medications I Should Stop: Include a list of medications that the patient should no longer be taking. Remind the patient and family that any unused pills should be returned to their pharmacy for proper disposal.

Design Considerations

Use larger fonts: Use a minimum 12 point font..

Use plain language relevant to the patient: Use plain language and headings that are relevant to the patient. Use active voice and a positive tone because it makes it easier for

patients to understand and act on. Write to the patient and their caregiver using the words I, we, and us and referring to the reader in the first person. Avoid unnecessary abbreviations.

Use visual (when possible) and written communication: When possible, use common icons to represent section headings and other items, such as time of day.

Include white space for note taking: Provide white space and encourage patients and their families to use it to take notes and write down questions when going through the medication list with them.

Use a user-friendly chart: Patients and families find it easier to understand information about their medications when it is presented in a chart form, rather than a list.

Use check boxes: Use check boxes for clarity and simplicity for noting whether or not a prescription has been ordered, which medications have already been taken in hospital on the day of discharge, and to remind the patient and family to return unused medications they are no longer taking. Within the medication chart, check boxes can be used to note when to take each medication.

Include multiple languages (if appropriate): Even if you cannot provide a translated document, having the headings translated is very helpful. Numbering sections and using icons also helps.

Process Considerations

The Patient Oriented Medication List is meant to support process elements identified as important for communication and education about medications for patients and families. Core process considerations for all PODS-related tools include (1) **involving the patient and family**, (2) **using conversation techniques such as teach back**, and (3) **involving interpreters if applicable**.

Tool 3 - Blister Pack Insert

The Blister Pack Insert can be used on its own or be placed into the inside cover of a blister pack. It is designed to reinforce the medication routine created while in hospital using the Medication Whiteboard.

Content Considerations

The key elements related to the medication routine created on the Medication Whiteboard are included.

Medication: This section should include a name and description of the medication in order to educate the patient and family on what the medication is called (e.g. generic or brand name), what the medication looks like (e.g. a red tablet or a spray or liquid), and how much of the medication they need to take (e.g. two 500mg tablets).

For What? This section should explain why the patient needs to take each medication, as understanding why each medication is taken has been proven to result in improvement in medication management and overall adherence.

How to Take: This section should provide information on how to take each medication. This includes information such as whether it needs to be taken with or without food, whether taking it together with specific medications or foods should be avoided, and helpful tips specific to that patient and family (e.g. preferences to take the medication mixed into certain foods or while being distracted with music or a television show).

Design Considerations

Clear Sections: The content sections are clearly defined and easy to understand

Symbols for Time of Day: The symbols are helpful for patients and families to picture their daily routine and how medications fit in.

Time: Under each symbol for the time of day is a line for the patient and family to note the specific time they will be taking their medication, helping them establish a daily medications routine that works for them. For example, some patients will choose to take their first dose of medication at 8:00 am and others at 9:00 am. Having the ability to add specific times that fit within their specific daily routine, is helpful for patients.

Notes: The addition of the notes section gives the patient and family a place to note their questions that they have or anything they wish to discuss with the healthcare provider.

Process Considerations:

The Blister Pak Insert is meant to support process elements identified as important for communication and education about medications for patients and families. Core process considerations for all PODS-related tools include (1) **involving the patient and family**, (2) **using conversation techniques such as teach back**, and (3) **involving interpreters when applicable**. In addition to the core process considerations, the Blister Pack Insert also reinforces the medication routine created while in hospital. It can be used on its own as a way

for the patient and family to visualize and follow their medication routine or be placed inside the cover of their blister pack.