

Reprint

To Build Patient Adherence, Pfizer Puts Technology behind the Curtain

By Jack Barrette



Diane Stafford

While technology will enable pharma to execute complex consumer relationships, effective patient adherence programs will put tech to work as infrastructure—not as a primary communications medium.

At the recent eyeformarpha Patient Compliance 2004 conference in London, Diane Stafford, Head of Patient Relationship Marketing for Pfizer UK, asserted that she is approached about twice a week by vendors “selling SMS (Short Message Service), text messaging, or web sites as the answers to all my compliance problems. But we can’t use technology as the delivery mechanism if it’s not right.”

show the same high penetration among 45-65-year-olds, but even more sporadic usage.

To properly determine communication channels, Stafford urges pharma marketers to “find new ways to get into the shoes of our patients.” Adherence program design should begin with study of each drug’s consumers; marketers must go beyond demographics and segmentations that may have successfully generated the first Rx to find out how patients communicate naturally about their condition. From this work, some overall trends are emerging; Datamonitor has studied channels of patient compliance communication, and created a scorecard of compatibility (Figure 2, next page).

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Usage, Not Penetration

Stafford is supportive of online and mobile programs, but she cautions marketers to understand their market before determining their communications channels. Pfizer UK’s portfolio, for example, tracks over 60% of its newly diagnosed patients into the 45+ age group. Internet penetration of that group is high, but usage is actually quite low, with about 50% using the Internet less than one hour per week (Figure 1, this page). Mobile phones

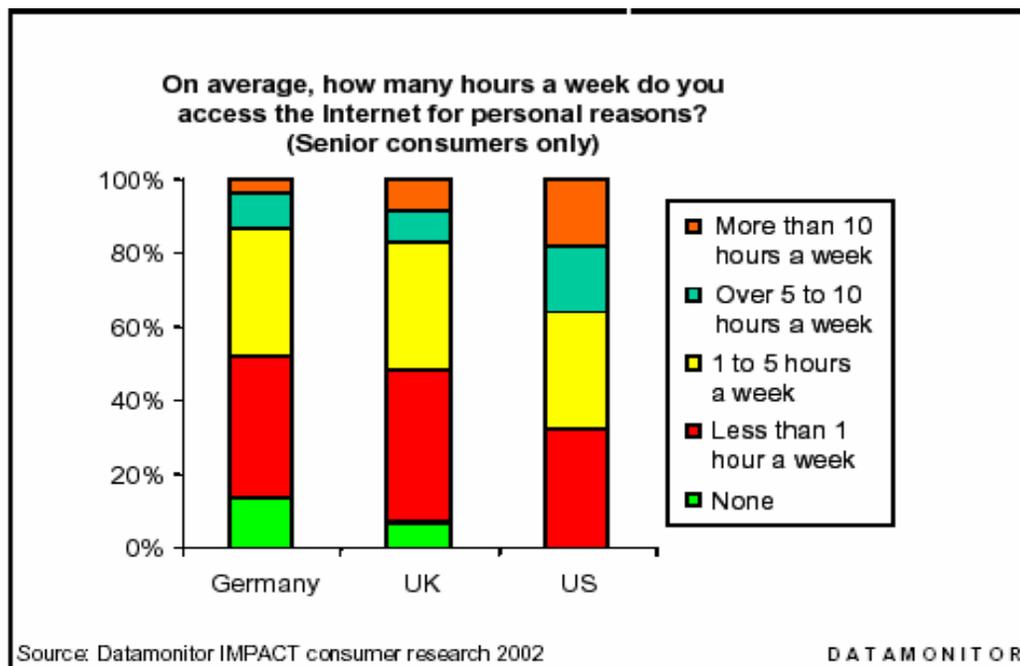


FIGURE 1: Over a quarter of online seniors in the US access the Internet at least five hours a week for personal reasons.

InformED Compliance Program Case Study

Natural communication is no small challenge in the Erectile Dysfunction category, where Pfizer’s Viagra is under heavy competitive pressure from GSK’s Levitra and Lilly’s Cialis. In fact, Pfizer UK has found that 55% of men stop treatment within 12 months, and many of these within the first six months. With each company waging extensive campaigns to switch consumers, Pfizer has found success in extending length of therapy by working directly with the patients already on their product.

InformED is Pfizer’s multi-channel consumer outreach program, which communicates with patients through:

- call centers;
- direct mail;
- web programs (including web site www.informED.org.uk)

The program (simplified here to protect Pfizer’s proprietary strategies) kicks off by asking enrollees to complete a questionnaire, designed to begin their profile by segmenting them into one of 5 stages along the patient pathway (see figure 3). But the key, notes Stafford, “is uncovering why the patient came to the treatment in the first place, and then building our communications from that platform.”

Technology, in the form of customer relationship software, drives the campaigns that make up the

complex InformED program. Dozens of messages, in many potential combinations, are constantly tuned to:

- Patients’ reasons for beginning treatment
- Patients’ views and beliefs about erectile dysfunction
- Patients’ views and beliefs about their medications
- Patients’ stage in treatment
- Patients’ ongoing responses to information and program questionnaires

Still a relatively new effort, InformED has shown strong – albeit proprietary – results for Pfizer. By supporting patient audiences with the media channels they use daily and comfortably, patients have stuck with the program in good numbers. And by putting technology to work to constantly refine each consumer’s communication, Pfizer UK has changed behavior: as compared to its overall drop out rate of 55% by 12 months after first prescription, “early compliance results indicate that over 70% patients are still on treatment up to 7 months later.”

“This is not a simple program, and it’s not a single-channel program,” notes Stafford, “but technology makes it possible, even if patients never see it.”

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FIGURE 2: Different channels are suited to sending different compliance messages to patients.
Source: Datamonitor

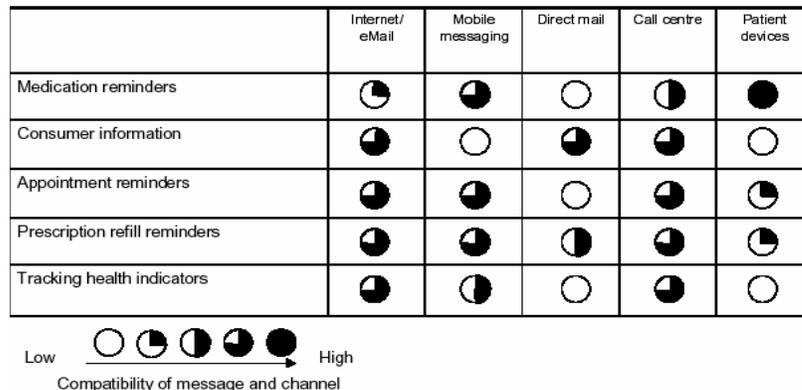
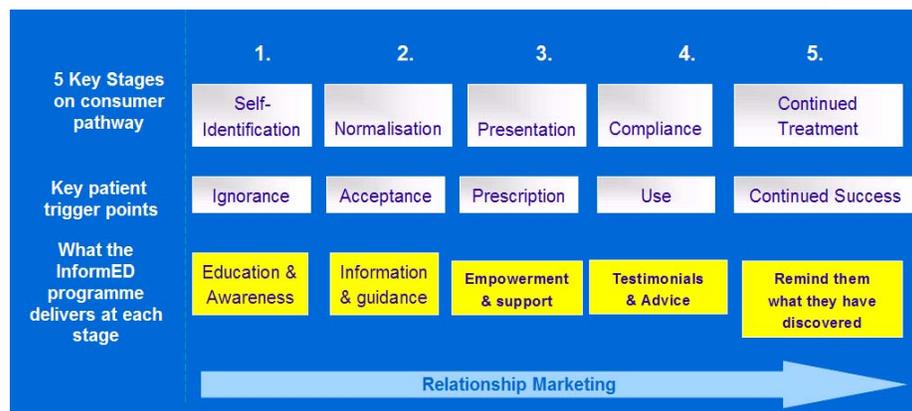


FIGURE 3: Typical ED Patient Pathway



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