

Study highlights lack of patient knowledge regarding hospital medications

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In a new study to assess patient awareness of medications prescribed during a hospital visit, 44% of patients believed they were receiving a medication they were not, and 96% were unable to recall the name of at least one medication that they had been prescribed during hospitalization. These findings are published today in the *Journal of Hospital Medicine*.

Inpatient [medication errors](#) represent an important patient safety issue, with one review finding some degree of error in almost one in every five medication doses. The patient, as the last link in the medication administration chain, represents the final individual capable of preventing an incorrect medication administration. Researchers from the University of Colorado Denver School of Medicine conducted a pilot study to assess patient awareness of their in-hospital medications and surveyed attitudes towards increased patient knowledge of hospital medications.

"Overall, patients in the study were able to name fewer than half of their hospital medications," said lead researcher Ethan Cumbler, M.D., Assistant Professor of Medicine at the University of Colorado Denver. "Our findings are particularly striking in that we found significant deficits in patient understanding of their hospital medications even among patients who believed they knew, or desired to know, what is being prescribed to them in the hospital."

The study involved 50 participants, aged between 21 and 89, who all self-

identified as knowing their outpatient medications, spoke English, and were from the community around the University of Colorado Hospital. Nursing home residents and patients with a history of [dementia](#) were excluded.

Patients younger than 65 were unable to name 60% of medications which they could take as needed, whereas patients older than 65 were unable to name 88% of these medications. This difference remained even after adjustment for number of medications. For scheduled medications, which need to be taken at specific times, there was no difference in recall according to age.

Antibiotics were the most commonly omitted scheduled medication with 17% of all omitted drugs being from this medication group, followed by cardiovascular medications (16%), and antithrombotics (15%). Among medications which could be taken as needed, analgesics (33%) and gastrointestinal medications (29%) were commonly omitted by patient recall.

"Our study suggests that adult medicine inpatients believe learning about their hospital medications would increase their satisfaction and has potential to promote medication safety," added Cumbler. "I believe the findings of this research raise very interesting questions about the role and responsibilities of patients in the [hospital](#) with respect to their medication safety."

Source: Wiley ([news](#) : [web](#))

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