

Increasing Medication Self Awareness Among Elderly Individuals in a Rural Community Through an Educational Program





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Introduction

- Older adults (>65 yrs) contribute disproportionately to pharmaceutical usage in the US. They are approximately 13% of the population and create over 30% of pharmaceutical expenditures.
- It has been speculated that though the amount of medications purchased is high, the amount taken correctly may be lower, an estimated 50%. This disparity is thought to be due to socioeconomic, cognitive impairment, and drug self management problems.
- Some studies addressing drug management problems have shown that not all patients know the names, reason for their prescriptions, or the dosages.

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Purpose:

- To evaluate personal knowledge about medications in elderly Midwest Rural Americans.
- To provide seniors with aids and information on methods of keeping track of their medications.
- To evaluate an educational program's effects.





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Methods:

■ *Study population*

A one hour workshop was presented using a UI at Rockford IRB Committee approved format on March 3, 2006 at the Bureau County Senior Center in Princeton, Illinois. Participants were recruited through a flyer in the weekly newsletter from the Senior Center.

■ *Presentation*

The workshop stressed the importance of keeping track of and up to date on personal medications as well as tips about safe and effective use of medications. Content included pill box options and medication card demonstration. Participants were also informed about the importance of taking medications as prescribed.

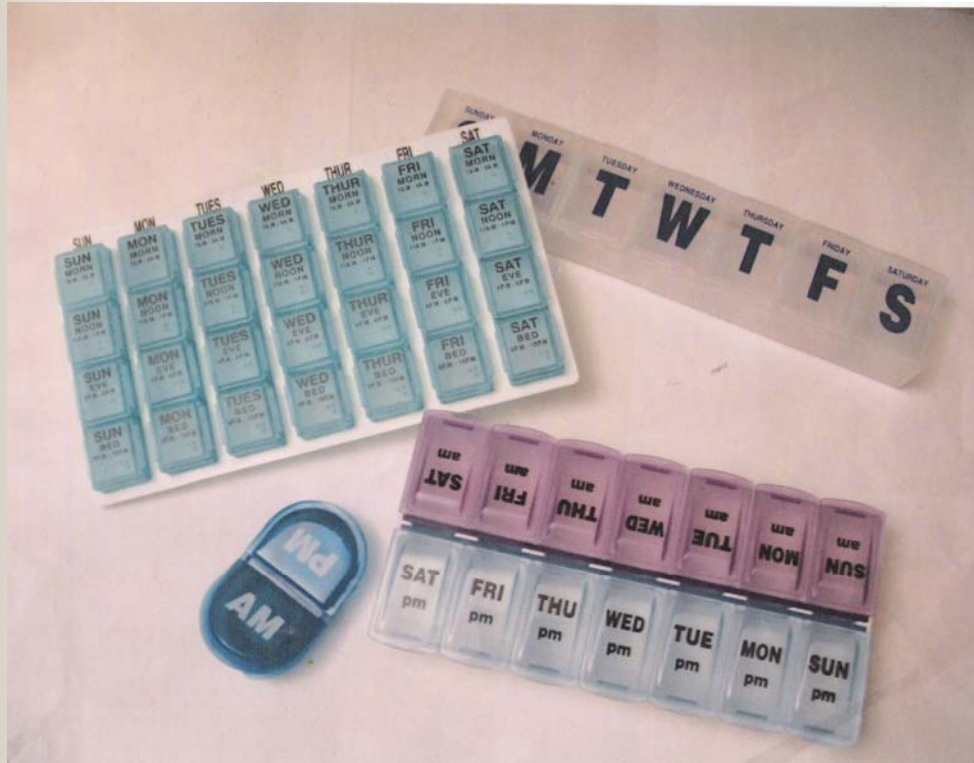
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Pill box options:

Different sizes

Daily vs. Weekly

One a day vs. Multiple times





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Methods

■ *Data Collection*

At the end of the session participants filled a program evaluation providing overall summary of experience, information regarding personal medication and other areas of concern.

■ *Data Analysis*

Several of the participants did not respond to all questions on the survey. In the calculations of percentages these answers were not considered.

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Results

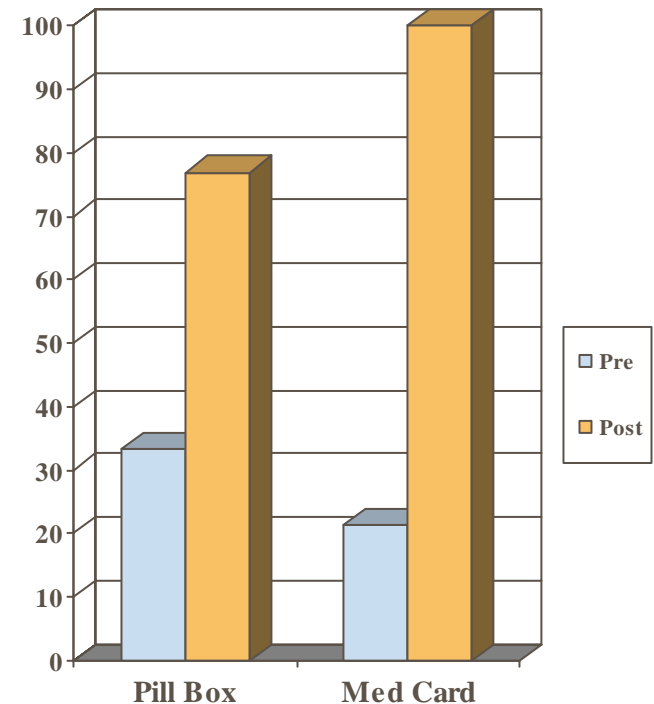
A total of 14 surveys were completed by the 19 individuals who participated in the information session. This corresponds to a survey response rate of 73.4%.

Female	85.7%
Average Age	82.7 yrs
Average number of meds	3.15
Take medication	98.3%
Do not know name of meds	33.3%
Take vitamin or herbals	57.1%
State that their physician is aware of vitamins/ herbal use	100%
Pre presentation use of a pill box	33.3%
Pre presentation use of a medication card	21.4%

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Results

- Pre-presentation use of pill box: 33.3%
- Pre-presentation use of a med card: 21.4%
- Post-presentation intent to use pill box: 76.9%
- Post-presentation intent to use a medication card: 100%





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Discussion

The data generated from this study provides a snapshot image of medication use among elderly individuals in a rural Midwest community. Similar to other studies, a high percentage of seniors take medications and of those, more than a third did not know the medications they were on. As the data for this study was acquired in the community versus the health care setting, it is more likely to be representative of the general population than if participants were recruited from a physicians office.



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Discussion

It is important to note that the N value for this study was low. This may be due in part to the lower than anticipated numbers at the informational session. Should this project be continued in the future, several sessions at different venues throughout the community may provide a higher number of participants.

Additional copies of the medication cards were supplied at the Senior Center and at a health care clinic in the area for persons unable to attend the session. The characteristics of the population that will use them and effect of these aids on the community is unknown.



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Conclusions

The findings from this study are consistent with prior studies. However, results of the current study need to be viewed with caution. The sample population is small and was drawn from just one county in Illinois. The extent to which this sample reflects all elderly rural community dwellers is not known and does not reflect on other factors that may contribute to elderly medication compliance.

Additionally, it has been demonstrated that informational sessions and access to aids such as pill boxes or medication cards can provide seniors with important information. To further explore the effectiveness of the aids and information session, follow up studies may be considered.

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