



**Department of Health  
and Mental Hygiene**

Thomas Farley, M.D., M.P.H.  
Commissioner

Dear Health Care Professional:

Nearly half of all adult New Yorkers are affected by hypertension, high cholesterol or diabetes. Many more suffer from other chronic diseases. Almost 50% of Americans take at least one prescription drug, often for these key chronic-illnesses. Only half of these patients take their medication correctly, and many patients who receive drug prescriptions fail to fill them. Here in New York City, nearly 600,000 people reported leaving a needed prescription unfilled in 2007.

Good medication adherence can prevent strokes, heart attacks, renal failure and other complications from poorly controlled diseases. Poor adherence, especially in patients with chronic illnesses such as diabetes and heart disease, is associated with increased risk of hospitalization and death. Nationwide, nonadherence results in \$100 billion in direct health care expenses, \$50 billion in lost productivity, and \$1.5 billion in lost earnings.

Primary care providers, pharmacists and other health care providers play a vital role in helping patients take the medications they need and thereby improving their outcomes. This Action Kit includes tools you can use to help your patients overcome barriers. Here are some of the important steps that every provider should take:

- **Assess adherence and discuss possible barriers to adherence during every patient visit.**
- **Reconcile your medication lists with the patient's list, adjust doses and eliminate unneeded medications.**
- **Prescribe once-daily formulations, less expensive generics and longer-lasting supplies of medicine whenever possible.**
- **Provide tools such as pill boxes and medication lists to help patients remember to take their medications.**

Your Health Department representative is visiting you to discuss ways of integrating these tools, resources and patient education materials into your work. Thank you for your dedication, and for contributing to the health of all New Yorkers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas Farley".

Thomas Farley, M.D., M.P.H.  
Commissioner