THREE THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT:
NON-ADHERENT PATIENTS

1. While one would like to believe that adults should be held accountable for their own actions or inactions, if a patient is harmed due to his or her nonadherence to a physician's recommendations, a jury will look to see what efforts the physician made to affect adherence believing that a physician has a better understanding of the ramifications of a patient's failure to pursue or continue treatment than does the patient.

2. Displeasure with side-effects (e.g., weight gain, sexual dysfunction, acne) is a common reason for patients to fail to take prescribed medication. Other reasons include belief that the medication is ineffective because the patient did not see an anticipated improvement in a specific time period, lack of appreciation of benefit if changes are not felt or seen, and belief that the condition has been "cured" once some improvement is seen.

3. Documentation is key in managing risk associated with nonadherent patients. Remember to thoroughly document patient's nonadherence, your conversations with patient and/or patient's caregivers regarding the need to follow your recommendations, as well as any written materials given. Remember also to note any calls made to the patient and retain copies of all letters sent.

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