

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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***New York Times* Letter to the Editor Emphasizes Pharmacists as Medication Experts**

Alexandria, Va. – AACP Executive Vice President and CEO Lucinda L. Maine, Ph.D., R.Ph., authored a letter to the editor of *The New York Times* underscoring the important role pharmacists play in a patient’s medication adherence. She urged the editor and reporter to interview pharmacists, not just physicians, and to consider the potential socioeconomic reasons, among others, as to why patients may not take their medications.

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To the Editor:

I read Jane Brody’s April 17th Personal Health column – “[The Cost of Not Taking Your Medicine](#)” – with both interest and consternation. The issue of nonadherence is important, not just to patients but also to their healthcare providers. As a healthcare professional, I know that we must provide the best care and guidance to patients – and we must help them manage their medications properly.

I was concerned, first, that Brody cited a review in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, which is at least five years old; published in 2012, it likely contained data compiled earlier. I would have expected to see more recent studies on such an important issue.

Next, I was particularly dismayed that Brody quoted only physicians – and a physician’s hairdresser! – on the issue of medication nonadherence. Why weren’t pharmacists interviewed for this column? They are specifically educated to be the medication experts on the healthcare team. They know how to counsel patients to encourage proper adherence. And they are trained in motivational interviewing techniques and medication management reviews.

Finally, I was surprised at the condescending tone of the column. It was clear that Brody was laying the blame for nonadherence solely on patients, rather than understanding that there can be many reasons why patients fail to take their medicines properly. Indeed, we know of patients who have stopped refilling prescriptions due to recent job losses and homelessness, or of patients who don’t understand how to properly inject insulin. Fortunately, pharmacists were able to help them.

Appropriately, the *Annals of Internal Medicine* review, which Brody cites, recommends that physicians and pharmacists work together to optimize patient care and outcomes. This, along with putting the patient in the center of care delivery, is ultimately a solution to the seemingly intractable issue of medication nonadherence. I would be glad to discuss this important issue with Brody, and to share the many ways in which pharmacists help people live healthier, better lives.

Sincerely,

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American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy