A constructive view of the non-compliant patient: Understanding barriers to compliance and proposed solutions

Barbara Smith

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A CONSTRUCTIVE VIEW OF THE NON-COMPLIANT PATIENT:
UNDERSTANDING BARRIERS TO COMPLIANCE
AND PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

by
Barbara Smith
June 1998
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UNDERSTANDING BARRIERS TO COMPLIANCE

AND PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

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Dr. Rosemary McCaslin, Project Advisor, Social Work

Dr. Rosemary McCaslin, Chair of Research Sequence, Social Work

Dr. Teresa Morris, Chair of Social Work Department
ABSTRACT

Patient non-compliance is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon. Using a constructivist paradigm, this study examined the diverse perspectives of hospital employees on non-compliance, the barriers to compliance and possible solutions. Information gleaned from this study supported the literature in that education, culture, language barriers, apathy among patients and staff, patient support systems, financial and resource issues, and limitations of staff impact a patient's ability to comply with a regimen and must be taken into consideration when attempts are made to improve compliance rates. Understanding reasons for non-compliance is critical to arriving at a solution(s) due to the changing nature of the health care system. Early intervention by the hospital social worker will continue to increase in order to assess doctor/patient communication, family perception of the patient's disease, the patient's understanding, and ability to follow the post-hospital regimen. The "constant comparative method" proposed by Lincoln & Guba, (1985), was used for data analysis.
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PROPOSAL

Focus of Inquiry

The health care industry is currently experiencing many changes. Managed care is altering the way health care is delivered through advances in technology and new approaches in financing (Berkman, 1996). As a part of this transition, importance will be placed on patients becoming better consumers and "participants in determining their health care service needs." The focus of this study is on the non-compliant patient and the many factors that revolve around this topic. This issue was explored within the boundaries of a hospital setting in the State of California.

Although patient non-compliance could be taken as an issue within the domains of direct practice, community interventions or administration and policy, this research proposal focused on the arena of direct practice issues, directed towards the patient/health care provider relationship and the effects of that relationship on compliance and non-compliance with follow-up regimens. This included, but was not limited to, follow-up appointments following a hospital discharge or a doctor
visit, filling a prescription and taking the medications as prescribed, or adhering to a diet and exercise plan according to health needs.

Statement of Purpose

Patient non-compliance has been identified as a major public health problem (Donovan, 1995). According to DiMatteo (1995), two factors influence compliance: 1. Patient's beliefs in the value of the regimen, and 2. Patient's ability to overcome practical barriers to adherence. Coons et al. (1994), show that "higher socioeconomic status, a greater number of prescribed medications, and higher psychological distress scores" are significantly related to non-compliance. Age does not seem to be a factor in compliance rates, but aging can create additional barriers. Compliance rates can range anywhere from 10% to 94% (Simons, 1992) which can have severe impact on increased medical costs, affecting society as a whole. In addition, patients may suffer "complications of the disease process, exacerbations and prolongations of illness." Non-compliance may also cause a health care professional to "misdiagnose an illness or inappropriately
alter the treatment" (DiMatteo, 1995). With the advent of managed care and the push to control costs by improving efficiency (Sharp, 1995), and an emphasis increasingly towards the outpatient setting (Kiefe, 1993), it is up to all health care providers to understand and work as a team with their patients to "understand each others goals' and preferences" to enhance compliance and avoid costly rehospitalizations.

**Literature Review**

The term non-compliance carries negative connotations for most, but if we review the definitions of "compliance" we also see the negative presumption this word can denote. Paine, (1996), in her paper on "Non-Compliance as a Patient Right" discusses the concept of compliance as: A. Black's Law Dictionary: "Submission; obedience; conformance." B. Dorland's Medical Dictionary: "a quality of yielding to pressure or force without disruption." C. Stedman's Medical Dictionary: "The consistency and accuracy with which a patient follows the regimen prescribed by a physician or other health professional." D. Ballentine's Law Dictionary: "Comply" - "To perfect or carry into
effect; to complete; to perform or execute in accord with a previous contract or arrangement." Scofield (1995), defines non-compliance as "the failure of the patient to cooperate in carrying out that portion of the treatment plan that is under his or her control."

These definitions can carry with them "an underlying authoritarian, dictatorial tone on the part of health care givers and a yielding, acquiescent image of clients" (Simons, 1992). The above definitions illustrate the need to understand the physician / patient relationship from both perspectives to hopefully enhance the effectiveness and delivery of health care. Non-compliance is a "complex, subtle, and multifaceted phenomenon" that is poorly understood (Scofield, 1995). Because of this lack of understanding, resolutions are proposed that are groundless and do not help to resolve the issue. Non-compliance can be viewed as patient autonomy to self-neglect and finally to self-destructive tendencies. The paradox here is that autonomy is associated with the "principle of self-determination" which is something society places value on. So, in order to be compliant, does the individual abandon
his or her values and power of choice? These are terms that society has created which can sensitize us to the real issues of non-compliance. When an individual chooses a certain life style, the medical community places (subjective) judgment on them whether they deserve to be treated or not. This is another way of possibly denouncing the patient's values. Also, in order for patients to comply, they must first believe in the "medical model of illness and disability" (Scofield, 1995). There are also individual and cultural differences that can cloud one's perception of the benefits of modern medicine. In addition, how do we rate the patient who is partially compliant? This is the patient who may completely comply one day and not the next, or comply within some gray area between compliance and non-compliance. DiMatteo (1995), discusses the fact that some patients "honestly forget" to take their medications, and the more dosages they are required to take daily, the greater chance they are to forget. There does not seem to be any objective way to really measure compliance.

Judgment over a patients compliance should first take
into account the many factors that may affect an individual's ability to comply. Such variables as "age, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, education, occupation, ethnicity, religion, race, lifestyle, and the nature of their illness or disability" should be accounted for before a judgment is made (Scofield, 1995). Also, obstacles account for many patients' failure to comply. For instance, we must take a step back and decide what is a reasonable regimen to follow, taking into account that the patient is capable of following a regimen. How much control do they have to follow through with the doctor's expectations for them? Physical, visual, and hearing impairments may hinder their ability to comply. In addition, these impairments may increase over time, making a once compliant patient, non-compliant. Also, the mental ability of the patient must be accounted for. Scofield (1995), describes an individual as needing the ability to "pay attention, learn, remember, organize, initiate, execute and integrate a therapeutic regimen into his or her life." Alzheimer's disease, or a traumatic brain injury may "impair their cognitive functioning." Even emotional disorders must
be taken into consideration which can be long standing or be triggered by an illness. These emotional disturbances can be on a continuum and may also impede the attention normally given to one's physical care. Also, one often overlooked aspect is the fact that many individuals are not able to read or write. Illiteracy may affect the individuals' ability to comply, being too proud to disclose this information.

Many patients may wish to comply, but illness and disability (that can potentially last 20 to 50 years plus) can make adhering to a medical regimen burdensome. Scofield (1995) discusses how patients are sent home and expected to manage "catheters, bowel and bladder programs, injections, dialysis, complex medication arrangements, ventilators, and stomas of many sorts" in addition to managing life-long medication schedules. "The longer lasting and more extensive the medical intervention, the greater the chances of non-compliance" (Frank, 1992). "The emotional reaction of the chronically ill patient to his condition may represent the most significant obstacle to his treatment" (Meisekothen, 1993). Although estimates vary, approximately "one half of
patients with chronic diseases do not comply with their program of medical therapy" (Orenticher, 1991). Similarly, an article in Modern Healthcare (Scott, 1996), discussed the fact that one half of patients do not take their medicines correctly and approximately 17% of patients leaving their doctors offices decide at that time "they're not going to take their medications". This may result when patients do not feel comfortable discussing issues with their doctor and decide privately that they are not going to comply, which gives them a sense of control over the situation (DiMatteo, 1995). For some elderly patients, their inability to open some medication bottles, specifically the "push and turn" kind result in their not taking the drug (Nikolaus et al, 1996). When prescriptions are frequently changed, especially during a hospital stay and after discharge, the more drugs that are prescribed will increase non-compliance rates. In addition, "drugs and dosages differ from those prescribed", sometimes because the prescription was illegible. This results in an estimated $76 billion worth of direct medical costs each year. "Between 3% to 5% of hospital admissions stem from patients' failure to comply with drug orders"
(DiMatteo, 1995; Coons, 1994). From these rates, 90% of this non-compliance is due to under-compliance; patients taking less medication than prescribed (Leirer et al. 1991). Also, the more complex the schedule, the more increase in non-compliance. In addition, many times patients stop taking their medicines after a few days because they feel better and are ignorant of the consequences which can be detrimental with chronic diseases like hypertension and can also lead to a premature death. Also, combining certain drugs can increase or decrease their effects.

From the physician's perspective, pressure is likely to increase to resolve the issues of the non-compliant patient. Because the "health care system" is entering into the "managed care system", outcomes and the efficient and effective use of resources are becoming ever more important (Scofield, 1995). Out patient services will continue to increase, making compliance ever more important "in the delivery of cost-effective health care" (Ibach 1995). Being responsible for ones own lifestyle and use of health care resources wisely is becoming an expectation by the medical community and society that will only continue to increase.
It is frustrating and costly for physicians to prescribe a treatment regimen only to see it undermined by non-compliance. "It over utilizes the time, medication, equipment and space, money, and personnel devoted to providing health care" (Scofield, 1995). A patient's refusal to comply can also affect their relationship with friends, family members, their physician, and can cost them "time, money and energy".

Hippocrates discussed with physicians that "patients often fail to take their medicines as prescribed" (Orentilcher, 1991). These relationships were paternalistic, where the physician gave the orders and it was assumed that the patient would comply (Brock, 1990). Patients must share the responsibility to comply with their treatment, but how do physicians handle the patient who is truly responsible for their non-compliance? Currently, there are no hard and fast rules over whether a physician can deny treatment to a patient for non-compliance. Documentation and legal interventions are sometime needed to resolve this issue.

From the patient's perspective, the variables involved are numerous. First, Scofield (1995) uses the term
"intelligent non-compliance", based on the fact that patients may deliberately modify, reduce, or stop the regimen all together because of disagreeable side-affects from drugs, their lifestyle or schedules. These patients are compliant in "spirit" unless this proves to be harmful to their overall health and well being. Non-compliance may be the result of the "patient's family, living and employment situation or the patient's financial and insurance circumstances". Ibach, (1995), also points to "communication problems, absence of a sense of urgency for keeping an appointment, lack of a personal physician, and ignorance of one's medical condition". Some families are not supportive of the patient's medical needs and regimen (Orentlicher, 1991).

In other cases, patients choose to decline treatment which is the only control they are able to exert in their lives. As a result of this independent stance, "patients are willing to trade length of life for quality of life." Some patients suffer from depression or are suicidal and therefore act out in ways that are self destructive. They may become hostile or refuse to take medications, they may
miss follow-up doctor appointments or avoid "stress provoking activities" (Meisekothen, 1993). When health care providers are not cognizant of this, it becomes very easy to "label" them non-compliant. Patients view many physicians as paternalistic and are reluctant to share their feelings and concerns with them. They feel that the physician becomes offended when questioned over treatment issues and the patient does not want to get on their bad side (Cole, 1992). Bayley (1996), discusses in her paper "Tough Choices" that "84 year old Arne" is a challenge to a case management department because he frequents their hospital ER which is a result of Arne taking his medicine every other day, instead of daily as prescribed. Arne then discusses quality of life issues and that on a fixed income he cannot afford to buy all of his medicine and play Bingo too. Losing his wife years ago, bingo is the only social activity he has to look forward to even if it means that his health will suffer. Patients must feel that they have a life outside of the sick role and this is their way of balancing their priorities (Cole, 1992).

Difficulties also arise over responsibilities for
family members which may make it nearly impossible to leave the house to fill prescriptions, or to comply with out patient office visits. Even the most "well intentioned" (and normally compliant) individuals may fall short of their own expectations while confined to the boundaries of home and family responsibilities. Transportation problems are another issue that will prohibit an individual from complying, if they are unable to drive themselves or do not have family or friends to help them, (eg. picking up prescriptions from the pharmacy, or following up with a doctor's appointment etc), (Orentlicher, 1991).

Likewise, just as illiteracy was discussed above as an obstacle to compliance, so is knowing too much. When there is too much information to attend to, patients may have trouble believing one source over another. Journals, books, newspapers, radio and television and support groups may all be sources of information which may confuse and over-ride the ability for an individual to comply. Non-compliance may be the result of denial by the patient due to psychological stresses of their disease. It is cited that as many as 11% of deaths in hemodialysis patients result from the patient
stopping treatment (Brock, 1990). Another study by Meisekothen, (1980), found that 61% of hemodialysis patients expired as a result of failing to comply with treatment regimens.

Lastly, some patients are willing to take a gamble and think they can "beat the odds." They either accept their medical problem or view it differently from the doctor, or may have had such a bad experience in the past with a certain treatment that they become almost "paralyzed with fear" thinking about it. Finally, sometimes patients do not understand the rational for making small gains in their health. This happens when the physicians are concerned with the overall health benefits of their community or country; eg. a national campaign to lower serum cholesterol. For example, the physician makes a request of the patient to cut down on red meat consumption from four times a week to three. This may prove to be beneficial to the overall population, if all individuals complied with this request, but may not seem important to one individual.

Non-compliance is a "multidimensional" problem (Leirer, et al, 1991). Proposed solutions may rest on physicians or
other health care providers to take the time to establish "what information the patient is capable of understanding, and to consider whether extraneous sources of information are interfering with the patient's desire to carry out the treatment plan" (Scofield, 1995). Having a deeper understanding of their patient's lives outside of treatment would help to define what treatments are reasonable and the patient is able to follow through with (Frank, 1992). This would help to reduce non-compliance overall. Many patients seek medical attention for "sympathy, reassurance, and validation (Redeimeier et al, 1993). Communication and education is also of utmost importance (Scofield, 1995). Many patients do not clearly understand what is expected of them. A physician's subjective view that instructions and explanations were adequate can surely be debated by many patients. Treatment goals must be "collaboratively" reached between physician and patient. This creates an investment by the patient to adhere to the regimen. Also, the way in which the physician "frames" the intervention will depend on how the patient interprets the information and whether or not he or she will accept it (Redeimeier, 1993). Without
exploiting the physician's perspective, information can be presented in a non-threatening manner when attempting to persuade a patient to comply. A physician should also take the time to understand what is influencing the patient's behavior to prompt their non-compliance. In addition to patients forming perceptions about their own medical needs, they also form perceptions about their doctors in regard to their "knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes" (Ibach, 1995). Health care providers must also have an awareness of patients that are passive and do not question the regimen, these patients are more likely to be non-compliant than those who "question recommendations, offer ideas and opinions, and even attempt to negotiate more acceptable regimens" (DiMatteo, 1995). Non verbal communication is just as important; "body language, eye contact, warmth, and empathy proclaim respect by the doctor. Respect is earned by developing a "rapport" with the patient which allows for trust to evolve. Patients will believe their physicians when there is trust between them. Physicians also need to take more responsibility when the desired outcomes are not achieved and not automatically blame or label their patients
non-compliant. "How much these 'lay' persons retain the ability
to direct their own lives during treatment is a constant sore point
with professionals, who then diagnose their own soreness as patients' "non-compliance" (Frank, 1992). It is a conflict over control; over empowerment and disempowerment. Self evaluation by a physician would be justified in order to balance the blame and attempt to rectify the situation.

Suggestions to increase patient compliance with medication usage have included, giving patients "week-long color coded pill trays, or daily tear-off calendars" (Leirer, et al, 1991). Engaging the patient in discussion about the need to comply with the doctor's orders before discharge from the hospital can increase compliance. In their study, Leirer, et al, found that using a voice mail system, called "TeleMinder", whereby computer software was programmed to dial a patient's home phone and relay a recorded message to remind them to take their medication. "The sender can increase the sophistication of the voice mail by asking the receiver to press buttons on the telephone keypad to: answer senders' questions, confirm the reception of the message,
request additional information, or branch to additional
parts of the message". In this particular study, non-
compliance was nearly eliminated. It has also been
suggested that pharmacists counsel patients on proper drug
use and provide educational pamphlets, in addition to new
"disease management programs" which try to avoid serious set
backs with patients and their chronic conditions (Scott,
1996). Another pharmacy selectively despatches "electronic
pill vials" and absorbs the $180 cost. In an Iowa study,
pharmacy computers are checking new prescriptions against a
"central Medicaid databank of patients' medication
profiles".

Managed care and its focus on efficiency and cost
containment, may prove a detriment to the doctor/patient
relationship. The focal point of managed care is to limit
the utilization of unnecessary health services by "altering
treatment processes in various ways" (Berkman, 1996). The
autonomy between doctor and patient will decrease as the
"institutions" of managed care make more and more of the
choices and arrangements once held exclusive within the
doctor/patient relationship. Capitation under managed care
provides incentives and rewards to those providers who keep patients healthy and out of the hospital. Increased patient loads will not permit physicians to spend the needed time with their patients to adequately educate them on the rational for adhering to a regimen, and many are not organized to deal with the "long term as well as the acute care needs of persons with a chronic illness or disability". As Scofield, (1995) states: "the non-compliant patient is likely to be the creation of the health care system itself."

Because the promotion of health and disease prevention is becoming more important, and hospitals who come under capitation will be financially rewarded for keeping patients out of the hospital, identification of the non-compliant patient will be essential for health care organizations to remain viable (Berkman, 1996). Collaboration among all health care providers is necessary in order to come to some agreement over the causes and possible solutions with the non-compliant patient. "The framework for practice in health care must include an understanding of the interaction among psychological, social, cognitive, and biological factors" of the patient. It will be paramount for health
care providers to screen patients that may be "at risk for physical, social, or psychological regression" in order to provide intervention in a timely manner to enhance compliance and deter hospitalization.

From the perspective of this social worker, experience shows that working in a hospital setting and working with "non-compliant" patients, provides many challenges for the doctor and all disciplines involved. Multiple readmissions require time, energy and resources. Resistance by patients to "comply" with doctor/staff recommendations and orders, in time, may begin to change the perception of the patient by staff. These perceptions can guide doctor/staff behavior, where investment in the patient's health and outcome may lessen. Emotions, such as frustration, disengagement, and the involvement of additional staff, most likely a social worker (in the hopes that someone can convince this patient to comply), ensue.

A constructivist study, engaging hospital health care providers, that will take a comprehensive view of the "non-compliant" patient, and what that means to staff, may help to educate and provide a base level of understanding of them
(the non-compliant patient) and the circumstances or barriers that prevent compliance. "It is estimated that by the year 2000, 90 percent of all medical benefits administration will be handled by managed care organizations" (Berkman, 1996). Because the structure of health care will continue to change and evolve, it is essential for all health care providers to advance their understanding of the human component and what it means to be a "patient", and determine how best to meet the needs within the doctor/patient relationship.

Figure 1 - Working Hypothesis:

1. Emphasis on education on the patient's disease process may help to increase patient compliance.

2. Shared decision making between health care worker and patient may help to increase compliance.

3. With increased understanding, it is hoped that hospital staff will take a more empathetic stance with non-compliant patients.

4. Looking at the patient from a holistic point of
view and understanding possible barriers to compliance may help to adjust treatment regimens in order to increase patient compliance.

5. Intense follow up by health care professionals may help to increase compliance.

**Determining the Fit of the Paradigm to the Focus**

Review of the literature on non-compliance highlights the variable accounts of this phenomenon. There is certainly no quick fix to the problem. Of course, to some, there is no problem and this varies by degree or can be viewed on a continuum. Every article addresses another aspect of why individuals are non-compliant. Patients are involved with an array of professionals during and after a course of illness, from hospital staff (which are many), to pharmacists, to follow-up appointments with their physician, to specialists, to counselors, to the social security office, to social workers, to clergy, to many other community agencies. The list could go on and on as every person has their own unique needs. Resolution to such a complex issue is nearly impossible if we continue to look at it as a "problem" of sorts. There are many views on what
non-compliance is depending on whose perspective your looking at. Because society takes on a certain structure, accomplishments are based on the individuals within that society, falling into line, with what has been considered normal by the consensus. Since there is a polarization of views between compliant and non-compliant, how does society come to terms with all the sub-definitions in between? How do we encourage our professionals, when dealing with patients, to take that one step further into their lives to develop a holistic understanding of their perspectives on life, their fears about their illness, treatment issues and what is reasonable to expect from them, obstacles to follow-up treatments and many other issues. Patients also must be encouraged to ask questions when they do not understand what is being asked of them. It has been said in the past that patients usually retain about 20% of what is told to them. So to remedy this, many agencies give patients handouts to read. How many of those handouts do they ever really read? Answers do not come quietly.
Increasing Communication Using a Constructivist Approach

Because of the diversity of this issue, and the relative nature of the term, constructivism seemed to be the appropriate paradigm that was equipped to address the many dimensions that non-compliance brings forth within this hospital setting. There are no policy and procedure manuals within the hospital under study, to follow, in dealing with non-compliant patients. There is professional communication between departments as patients undergo different procedures during their hospitalization but there is no uniformity among staff when a non-compliant patient is identified and in how they are dealt with. Because non-compliance, as a term, is so subjective, constructivism supports the view that nothing is objective, that concepts change over time. There are only working hypothesis that change and evolve as concepts change. It is the subjective views of reality by key stakeholders within the hospital that have any relevance to the situation. By using a "hermeneutic" dialectic process, these key stakeholders came together to ask "how" interventions may play a role to reduce the problem of patient non-compliance. Reality is a shared construction
which can change as new information is brought to light.

Because constructivism relies on the subjective accounts of stakeholders, the researcher relied on their accounts to be accurate and truthful. The researcher may never be completely aware of when a participant is giving inaccurate or skewed data, or what the reasons are for doing so. But because of the open process that was used to gather and refine data, no one piece of information was able to destroy the end result. Each piece of information was weighed and challenged by all other stakeholders in the circle.

Constructivism can be argued to be the more appropriate paradigm for this study, as it allowed for an emergence of ideas to develop and converge from those professionals that invest the most time and energy with the patient. Through critical analysis of shared ideas by each stakeholder, the term non-compliance was continually reshaped within the hermeneutic circle. Each idea hopefully inspired the thoughts of the next stakeholder to formulate new ideas based on the previous stakeholders ideas. Because no two people, or their experiences, are the same, dealing with the
non-compliant patient took on separate meanings for all. But like a puzzle, the final picture emerged as a complete construction of what non-compliance is and means. Pieces were continually added until there was a general consensus to what the problem is and how it can be approached. Through "expansion research" (Erlandson, 1993), studies may be conducted in different settings to "examine the credibility or transferability of the constructed realities found in one setting in a different setting."

Comparing Constructivism to other Research Paradigms

It should be discussed that because constructivism is an alternative paradigm, it was possible this hospital may not have been as receptive as they would be to traditional research. If resistance had been encountered to this new approach, an explanation of the process and advantages of constructivism would have been given focusing on the non-compliant patient. Acknowledgment would have been given to the merits of positivism, post positivism, and critical theory, each in their own rights. Each of these aims to predict and control through the process of being objective and value free. Although post positivism combines
qualitative research with quantitative research, the resulting quantitative data is used to convey the truth of the phenomenon. Each paradigm is guided by its own rules for inquiry and each must specify its own design and instrumentation before the research begins. Because non-compliance entails so many variables, constructivism would be argued as the more appropriate paradigm because of the nature of the inquiry. The aim is not to measure one piece of data against another, but to create an understanding of what non-compliance is, with all its variables, and how it can be approached, by one human to another, to hopefully attempt to resolve or at least lessen the problem. Results can then be broken down into separate units and traditional research can be carried out at that time, eg. measuring medication compliance or physician follow-up appointments.

Data Collection

Data was collected within a hermeneutic dialectic circle. This means that the researcher sought to interpret and organize information, or constructions, obtained from the participants, through patterns or themes. Constructions are "compared and constrained" (Erlandson et al. 1993), in
an attempt to integrate information. The researcher attempted to understand the phenomenon from the participants' view and "special meanings" (Rubin & Babbie, 1997), they attach to it.

Participants were chosen from key departments within the hospital. Before key stakeholders were interviewed, the confidentiality and anonymity of all participants was protected. This was accomplished by verbal explanation, and a consent form that was reviewed and signed by each key stakeholder in addition to hospital administration as appropriate.

Figure 2 - Initial Hermeneutic Dialectic Circle

Doctor
Administrator Pharmacist
Clergy Social Worker
Nurse/Case Manager Medical Eligibility
Financial Counselor Patient
Researcher

All of the above staff members were chosen as they represent many of the key departments in the hospital and each member could potentially have contact with the same
patient or their contacts are many to allow them contact with similar types of patients inside the hospital setting. It was understood that these staff members might not complete the research project and others might be added. In addition, sub-circles of any of the above staff members might form. Rubbin & Babbie also discuss the "snowball sample" that could be incorporated as appropriate. The hermenectic circle could expand from referrals from current participants to others that could contribute relevant information.

Using a constructivist paradigm allows for modification of the proposed hermenuetic dialectic circle. As interviews preceded, other participants were added to the circle either out of the staff members eagerness to participate in the study, referrals from existing participants, or the researchers observation that other departmental staff could contribute valuable information to the study.
To allow for an orderly emergence of new members to the hermenectic circle, one of the above staff members was chosen and interviewed for their input and perspectives on the issue of the non-compliant patient. According to Erlandson et al. (1993, pg 91 & 124), after this interview was completed, another staff member was chosen or agreed upon. Before interviewing the second staff member, notes from the first interview were "analyzed" by the researcher and the first interviewee to check for accuracy. The second staff member then had an opportunity to voice their opinions fully. When there were no other perspectives to contribute, the opinions from the first staff member were shared and
the second staff member then had a chance to respond to these opinions. The pattern continued until all staff members chosen, or those who were available, were interviewed.

Further discussion points to the fact that what the researcher was focusing on were staff members that could contribute "divergent constructions" (Erlandson et al., 1993). He goes on to state that information may ultimately become "redundant" or the constructions will form "two or more categories that remain at odds with each other". Second interviews may be held given the availability of staff and time permitting but only one interview was conducted due to time constraints of staff and of this researcher. It should be noted that sometimes the members of the circle will change for various reasons. In this case, accommodations were made for two participants that had to drop out of the study. Although they left for other employment opportunities, they permitted this researcher to use their information for this study. The process continued as constructions were shared from the previous staff members.
with the next member until some sort of consensus was achieved.

**Successive Phases of the Inquiry**

**Phase 1 "Orientation and Overview"**

After discussions with the hospitals administration, and managers of the departments of the key stakeholders, and with their permission, the researcher informed the participants of the research topic of non-compliance and requested their opinions and thoughts on the issue. All participants were advised that any information they gave would be shared with all other participants in the study. They were advised of the process involved in a naturalistic study, time commitments, and possible outcomes that will result. The researcher obtained a signed, informed consent to protect all involved. A review of the literature on the non-compliant patient was done to aid in the understanding of the topic, the important issues and variables involved. This allowed this researcher to develop the most appropriate questions in an effort to elicit the richest answers.

This researcher took a holistic stance while conducting the interviews, taking the participants whole context into
account; office environment, dress of participant, formality observed, tone of voice etc. This was to help understand the participants value system, past and present views of the non-compliant patient and their prediction of the future for resolution if possible. The conversation flowed in an open-ended manner and the researcher remained flexible as the participant took the lead. Opinions and facts were gathered within this dialogue. If terms or expressions were not understood, the researcher clarified with the participant the true meaning the participant wished to convey. The researcher was also obliged to not interfere by interjecting his/her opinions into the conversation.

Phase 2 "Focused Exploration"

This phase occurred after all key stakeholders had contributed their opinions one by one, with each stakeholder hearing all of the contributions from the previous stakeholders. This researcher then focused on the themes that had emerged. A shared meaning around the issues began to develop. The researcher looked for redundancy in their ideas which completed the interview process. When the information gathered showed a discrepancy between the
literature and the participants perspective, it prompted this researcher to ask "why" and look into this discrepancy further (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Phase 3 "Member Check"

This was a very important part of the process of assuring that accurate information was documented from the participants perspective and not the researchers. Member checking is a way for the researcher to validate his/her documentation by allowing the participants to review the material recorded to check for accuracy. It was done throughout the study and was done "formally and informally". The researcher may conduct member checking at any time during or after the interviews. Earlandson et al. (1993), discusses (pg. 142) the various ways member checking is executed. This researcher was also cognizant of the fact that there may be strong reactions to the information and without support from all that are involved, member checking may become the responsibility of a handful of individuals. Inaccurate information also may emerge if none of the participants wish to be critical in their review, but this remains covert knowledge. This researcher was sensitive to
unspoken "beneath the surface" agendas.

**Determining Instrumentation**

The researcher is the primary "instrument" in a constructivist study. Interviews were also used by this researcher as a method of instrumentation. In addition, observations by the researcher were documented. Choosing key stakeholders within this researcher's area of interest provided many points of view, adding to the richness of the data. It was imperative that each participant be treated with respect and their thoughts with privacy. Questions asked by this researcher were important in determining what direction the interviews took and how the study developed (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Participants were asked seven questions. Conversations started out in a broad manner and became more focused as participants shared their constructions.

**Figure 4 - List of Questions**

1. What is your definition of a non-compliant patient?
2. Why do you think patients are non-compliant?
3. What are the barriers they face?

4. How does staff relate to a non-compliant patient?

5. What are the consequences of non-compliance?

6. What are the benefits of non-compliance?

7. What are some proposed solutions to non-compliance?

The experienced researcher has had the opportunity to develop proficiency in the field by "comparing and evaluating alternative research designs, data collection techniques, and analysis strategies" (Erlandson et al., 1993). This allows the researcher to develop a "sensitivity to social issues". For the less experienced researcher, being constantly aware of the emotions being felt as issues are discussed and debated and perhaps waiting for a short time before recording the information may help the researcher to be more accurate in his/her narrations. Also, before approaching the key stakeholders, this researcher took into account any personal or professional experiences they have had with the topic, and remained cognizant that experiences vary from one person to another (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As the perception of an experience may be different from one person to the next, information gleaned may also be "context
specific." In addition, the knowledge gleaned from a literature review gave familiarity with the "phenomenon". This added to the researchers "theoretical sensitivity."

Strauss & Corbin see this as an "attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn't." This researcher was aware that internal feelings may affect the ability to collect and analyze data accurately. Documenting daily thoughts and feelings allowed this researcher to reflect on the feelings experienced, allowing for internal growth and expansion.

Planning and Data Collection and Recording Modes

To collect information accurately, the researcher must look to gather information from many sources. A method called "triangulation" was used whereby the researcher gathered information through multiple sources of "data, methods, investigators or theory" discussed by Erlandson et al. (1993). Being observant to the participants surroundings helped to paint a picture of the individual and their values. Using the researchers "five senses" allowed for an abundant amount of knowledge to be absorbed. Using
"thick description" in narration helped others visualize what the researcher experienced. Using "purposive sampling" helped to identify "who and what to study" after the researcher has identified the issue of interest. This is also discussed as a "process of elimination" of what not to investigate. Data collection stems from the dialog between the researcher and the participant in addition to the above discussion of the participants environment. Information was documented using pen and paper, and because key stakeholders were agreeable, tape recorders were used, which also ensured accuracy. This also assisted the researcher in looking back on interviewing skills and the ability to refine them as needed.

Recording data using "critical incidents" assisted the researcher in capturing the main functions of the key stakeholders. Critical incident referring to a "significant feature of the social context" (normal or abnormal). This was done after the researcher had time to familiarize herself to the surroundings of the hospital to make sure it was significant to the hospital and just not this researcher. Rubin & Babbie (1997), point out that the
researcher runs the danger of observing only those things that support the researchers "theoretical conclusions."

Constant self-reflection is required by the researcher to accurately reflect documentation. Earlandson defines this as "thinking and feeling."

Files were created with separate categories relevant to the topic of non-compliance to be used as a starting point for filing information (Rubin & Babbie, 1997). Categories were added and revised as appropriate.

**Planning Data Analyses**

Using the "Constant Comparative Method" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Rubin & Babbie, 1997), the information gathered in interviews and observations was categorized depending on its "theoretical properties." The processing of data began with the first interview. The categorization of "incidents" or "units" of data was classified under initial headings which was revised as themes became clearer. The researcher's task was to develop the initial headings and incorporate those that emerged from the data. Descriptive and explanatory categories emerged from the themes that the researcher developed and those that emerged from the
participants. Later on, as more information was gathered, the researcher began to analyze data by themes. Categorizing data and analyses was simultaneous. The researcher engaged participants and other "teammates" in constant clarification of the data collected to ensure accuracy.

All information collected from one interview was analyzed for accuracy and categorized before moving on to the next interview. The gathering of information from observations was compared to previous information. The categories were refined as new information was introduced. Information called "units of data" should have two characteristics; 1. Data must be aimed at "some understanding or some action that the inquire needs to have or to take", and 2. "It must be the smallest piece of information about something that can stand by itself." This is information that needs no other information to be understood. Information was then coded on index cards. The source of the information was noted on the back of the cards by either numbers linking them to a list of participants or in other ways that would represent the source, as
confidentiality must always be maintained. Although at first many index cards emerged, less arose as the study becomes more focused. The process began by reading card after card whereby different piles emerged depending on the contents of the information. Each pile represented a different category. For those cards that did not fit the established categories, a miscellaneous pile was made that was assessed for later relevance. Working hypotheses and concepts continued to develop throughout the information gathering process. Thoughts were expanded by writing them out and sharing them with peers for clarification. Properties of the categories were explored and listed to help define them. Questions arose as gaps in information became obvious which helped to guide forthcoming interviews. As the process continued, more categories developed to the point where new information fit into existing categories. Categories became "saturated" or "well defined" and eventually led to "closure" of the study.
Prior Logistical Considerations.

Consideration was made whether one or more hospitals should have been involved in the study. But there was such a rich mix of professionals within the boundaries of one hospital that ample information was available for this study. Reviewing literature on non-compliance was key before attempting any involvement with hospital staff (Rubin & Babbie, 1997). As discussed in question #4, hospital administration was involved to gain access to the hospital. Discussion of the length of the study was negotiated according to time constraints of the researcher and the participants, given school time frames and work schedules. Also, a study on non-compliance would allow for "expansion" research to be carried out later on, in the same or different hospital, to compare and strengthen findings.

Choosing a hospital setting allowed the researcher to capture the views of the primary professionals in the field that deal with the same issues, in the same environment. Non-compliance is an issue each professional has encountered at some level and has discussed with some degree of interest.
either to share feelings on the subject or in an attempt to resolve individual patient issues. Non-compliance posed as an interesting subject as there are no simple solutions. Using a "working hypothesis", and focused questions as an approach to open up discussions, allowed for participants to air their feelings and thoughts. It also gave "meaning and direction" to the research. There was an understanding that the hypothesis may change as the process of interviews and information began to emerge. The researcher's goal was to define the meaning of non-compliance among the key people in the hospital that the patient will most likely encounter. Using a "purposive sample selection", an array of key stakeholders was identified, as it was expected that some may not wish to participate and others may drop out during the study. The researcher must always remain flexible and open to new and changing ideas. A comprehensive knowledge of non-compliance by all those concerned helped those professionals to better understand the many variables involved and therefore enable them to deal with patients on a different level. In an effort to reduce non-compliance, healthcare professionals need to act in a more
preceptor/educator role vs. just treating the physical part of the patient.

Ethical issues were explored to safeguard all participants. As Erlandson et al. (1993), states "subjects must be protected against physical or psychological harm, including loss of dignity, loss of autonomy, and loss of self-esteem. In addition, protection of privacy and confidentiality is mandated, although it was communicated to the participants that contact may be required at unscheduled times to clarify information or change meeting times etc. The subject was also protected against unjustifiable deception and informed consent was needed to participate". The researchers aim was to "empower and educate" the participants. The researcher took the stance of "observer-as-participant" (Rubin & Babbie, 1997), which would have the researcher "interact with the participants in the social process but make no pretense of actually being a participant".

After completion of the study, the goal was to communicate the findings to hospital administration, and all departments involved in the study. Also, a summarized
document of the findings was distributed throughout the hospital as requested.

**Logistics in the Field**

Erlandson et al. (1993), talks about using your "five senses" plus intuition while conducting research. Using self awareness to attend to the many details that was experienced aided in developing a holistic picture of the hospital environment. Interviews with the various disciplines within their departments and watching them interact with their coworkers, within and outside their department, gave a sense of their daily routines and the problems they encounter. This researcher was always observant to the surroundings while doing interviews which helped to explain the participants realities. Showing interest in the participant and using listening skills enhanced the conversation and information gathered (Rubin & Babbie, 1997). In addition, Oakley (1990), suggested "a balance must be struck between the warmth required to generate 'rapport' and the detachment necessary to see the interviewee as an object under surveillance". Rubin & Babbie (1997), also discussed remaining objective. This
researcher attempted to avoid answering questions posed by the participant although in some cases it was unavoidable.

Participants may also have other meanings attached to the information they are giving and the researcher will not be able to reconstruct, accurately, their "reality" without making sure they clarify terms that are unclear. In other cases, the participant may not be able to accurately describe his/her reality to the researcher but the goal was to clear up any misunderstandings by the "member checking process". Also, building a level of trust by "prolonged engagement" with the participants allowed the researcher to engage in more comfortable conversations and therefore be more apt to ask for clarifications. It also allowed the researcher to follow up with the participants when further contact was needed. Arrangements were also made whereby the participants were able to get in touch with the researcher if any questions or concerns arose. This issue was also discussed in part A, whereby participants agreed before the interview process began that unscheduled contact may be required. Consideration was taken into account as to work schedules and when the appropriate time would be to
make contact.

Logistics of Activities Following Field Excursions

The researchers observations were noted during or soon after the interview to capture the full meaning (Rubin & Babbie, 1997). As discussed in question #4, after an interview, "member checking" was accomplished by transcribing the interview, delivering the participant a copy and requesting feedback and clarification. "Peer debriefing" used on occasion, to gain valuable feedback in an objective manner on the study by someone known and trusted by the researcher. This was a "peer" of the researcher not connected with the study. An "audit trail" was used as a way to add "dependability and confirmability" to the study by keeping records of all documents to support and authenticate the data.

Logistics of Closure and Termination

Bringing closure to an interview consisted of reviewing and clarifying the information that was documented with the participant. Each participant was thanked at the end of the interview for their time, energy and honesty. After all interviews were completed, the participants were asked to
attend a meeting, held in the hospital, where a number of key stakeholders came together to discuss the researcher's findings. The findings were presented to each stakeholder, in outline form, one week before the scheduled meeting. All participants were asked to review the outline and present their feedback (criticisms, additions, deletions etc.) in the meeting. During the meeting, valuable information was shared and all feedback was taken into consideration when writing up the final draft. Corrections were made as appropriate. It was important though to not bring closure to the relationship as additional information may have been needed or the participant may have had additional information to add.

Terminating the study came when the researcher felt competent that adequate information had been gathered and participants were in agreement on the findings. Attentive review of all documents was imperative. After an external audit was performed and the trustworthiness of the study was agreed upon, a final bound report was submitted to all key stakeholders and hospital administration for their review as requested.
Quality Control

To make this a good constructivist study, the researcher kept in mind, (from an ontological standpoint), that reality is a perception of the beholder and that individuals perceive their reality within the "context of a mental framework" (Guba, 1990). Interpretation was therefore dependent on a "window of theory". The methodology of constructivism was discussed in question #4, but to briefly review this approach, the researcher compares and contrasts each participant's constructions to eventually come to a level of consensus. The researcher must take a subjective stance as the constructions of those interviewed, develops. This epistemological notion sees the results of the study, a "creation of the process of interaction" between the researcher and the participant. As identified in question #3, a hermeneutic dialectic circle, which consisted of eighteen hospital employees, were interviewed from key departments. Participants were added to the circle as more information was needed, interest in the study was voiced, and others were identified as able to contribute relevant information. As a result, the researcher obtained
considerable amounts of information which made it imperative to continually analyze and organize data throughout the study.

Erlandson (1993), uses the term "gestalt" to define the process of data collection from beginning to end. In the beginning, a considerable amount of data was collected. The continued analysis and categorizing of this information brought the researcher to a point where interviews no longer yielded new information. This signaled the researcher to look for gaps in the information that had already been gathered which helped to narrow the focus of the research. The researcher continued to refine the categories and their properties.

An "audit trail" evolved as the researcher organized the documentation collected which allowed for verification of information at any point and time, during or after the study. The researcher was always willing and open to throw out or change the ideas discussed. Protecting the identity of the participants was also important as to avoid any repercussions within the hospital and later on. Establishing trustworthiness was key and as Erlandson et al. (1993),
points out "the probability that the findings and interpretations of a naturalistic study will be found to be credible depends on the inquires demonstration of a prolonged period of engagement, providing evidence of persistent observation, triangulating sources and methods, conducting extensive member checks, and guarding against both going native and premature closing".
RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to capture one hospital's perception of non-compliant patients. Through constructivist research, eighteen hospital staff members, from various departments, were interviewed with the intent to examine and understand their definition of non-compliance, the barriers and possible solutions to non-compliance. A single round of interviews was conducted in addition to a round table meeting to discuss the results. The researcher made every effort to include males and females and various races. Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, and Filipino were represented. As noted in "Data Collection", all participants were chosen either because they worked in a specific department, became aware of the study and wanted to participate, the researcher received a referral from a participant that addressed another staff persons expertise, or the researcher acknowledged others during the interview process that were thought to be valuable contributors. All interviews were held in the hospital and at the participants convenience. Each
participant was asked the seven questions and given as much time as needed to answer the questions. Clarifications were made by the researcher, as appropriate, to fully understand the participant's constructions. After the participant answered the seven questions, the researcher read back to them the constructions from the previous participants. If this brought new information to light, the participant was given the opportunity to add to his/her constructions.

The topic of non-compliance brought forth a pattern of many similar responses from all participants interviewed. What was interesting was that although there was much agreement in all areas, each participant was able to add a piece of new information to the subject that no other participant voiced. Although there was consistency among staff as to problems created by non-compliance, the researcher noted that participants were able to acknowledge that they were responsible for shouldering some of the responsibility for this occurrence, either by their attitudes toward the patient or because of a lack of time.

Interviews were then transcribed, and given back to the participant for review. The researcher encouraged all
participants for their feedback, either in writing or verbally. Interviews continued until the information became redundant. The information was then broken down onto 3 x 5 cards. Using the "constant comparative" method, the unitized data was then sorted into categories according to ideas. After enough cards were assembled, each category was labeled depending on the main idea of the data. All cards were coded to protect the identities of the participants, for easy referencing and accessibility, and to create an "audit trail." The narrative was developed by organizing the categories from thickest to thinnest pile of cards (the researcher assumed that the thicker the pile the more agreement there was on that particular theme and thus, more important. Many themes became a focus of attention by the participants as reflected by the patterns that evolved in all seven questions. The following analyses is presented which represents the constructions that were established after exploring the various opinions of hospital staff, regarding the issue of non-compliant patient's.

1. **What is your definition of a non-compliant patient?**

The majority of participants stated their definition of
a non-compliant patient was when there is a resistance by the patient to follow a prescribed treatment. This researcher found that cooperation on the part of the patient was an underlying theme regarding their resistance to follow a regimen. Many terms were used to describe the subjective nature of non-compliance such as "lacking adherence", "an act of will or choice", "does not cooperate", "refuses", "not willing or does not obey", or "not consistent". Even anger on the part of the patient was seen to be reflection of non-compliance. Responses indicated that patients deliberately did not follow the recommendations of their health care provider or appeared receptive to the education offered by staff and then chose not to comply. Patient's were also seen to sabotage the plan by not doing it right. Degrees or the depth of non-compliance were evident as participants gauged their answers according to the range and complexity of patients they have cared for. It was evident that non-compliance is seen on a continuum as patient's were observed to "not follow any instructions or only some of the instructions" given to them. Many times answers were reflective of the specific departments of which the staff
member worked and thus the type and intensity of the relationship between the staff member and the patient. Examples of this would be "an individual who does not consistently follow a prescribed medical or nutritional therapy regimen" or "a person that does not obey what is written or given to them in instructions for insurance purposes." Therefore, many answers reflected a particular component to the overall issue of non-compliance.

A majority of responses though were more generic in nature and echoed the stance of health care provider versus patient. One participant voiced that a non-compliant patient was someone "who by their actions or non-actions does not benefit from the treatment that has been planned for them." Another respondent stated that a non-compliant patient was a patient who "refuses a treatment or a procedure that is supposed to be done or ordered for them, refuses medications, or refuses to do what the doctors or nurses think would be a good thing for the patient to recover." Family members who are caregivers of patient's were also seen as being responsible for a patient's compliance as when they do not completely take care of
necessary therapies for the patient which included medications, appointments and doctor's visits.

Some patient's were seen to possess a lack of understanding of what the main goals were for their treatment. Many of these goals were goals that patient's have participated in making. Respondents state that the patient has then flatly refused to follow through for reasons unknown to staff. One participant responded by saying,

"A non-compliant patient is someone who has given instructions or education as to what steps they need to take and they do not proceed to do that. It could be either conscious or unconscious. I don't think that they are necessarily aware that they are rebelling against being compliant. Sometimes that non-compliance needs to be confronted. They need to understand that they are being non-compliant."

Lastly, it was relayed that there are those patients that are unable to comply, not by choice but by circumstances, where due to expense and monetary resources, the patient is not able to follow instructions. The participant did not
consider this to be a form of non-compliance. They felt that would be the responsibility of the health care professionals to intervene and provide the means by which they would be able to follow instructions.

2. **Why do you think patient's are non-compliant?**

   A lack of education or understanding was sited as a reason that patient's were non-compliant. Health care professionals are attempting to bring forth an alteration that is going to affect the patient's life and some just don't understand why they have to make these changes. Patient's may not know how their non-compliance will affect them in the future. Patient's are not convinced that the outcome is worth the effort and the ramifications of their non-compliance are not obvious to them. Goals may have been set by the patient and staff but the patient may misunderstand the process of what the goals originally were or what the plan of treatment was or they have perceived that they cannot follow through with the regimen. The information has not been integrated into their thinking and feeling which creates non-compliance.

   The way in which health care professionals are
addressing issues with patients may have an effect on their level of understanding. "Depending on how you instruct someone or give directions, the patient may have a different type of learning style." Patients may not have regimens explained to them properly or the information was not processed correctly. There is also the issue of communication barriers and how the patient is filtering the information presented to them. It was stated that doctors, nurses, all of us tend to assume that patients understand why they have to make changes, but this is not always the case.

"I think we have to be careful to determine what standard of compliance is for certain people. When you have a patient that is low functioning, that may be depressed, that may have psychotic features, so their life is difficult anyway, their rate or type of compliance is different and we need to be careful of what we expect of them and make requests for compliance realistic."

A patient's culture may also dictate whether they will integrate a regimen into their lifestyle. Staff may ask a patient to comply with a procedure or life change and it is
against their religion or ethnic background. In turn, their cultural background may dictate that they do certain things that staff do not want them to do or may think those things are wrong. For example, "in Thailand they do something called coining. It leaves marks and bruises on their body and we may think it is child abuse of some type." Another participant stated that a patient's culture and religious beliefs are not explored properly by health care professionals. There might be something in the history that is not included and it might be something very simple, it might be a basic belief that if explored, might result in a higher degree of compliance.

Patient apathy was viewed as a component of non-compliance. Some patients have adopted a lifestyle or a habit that they have become comfortable with and they do not see it as a detriment to their health. These patient's are advised to change these habits and they do not understand the consequences or they do not care about the consequences, "I'm going to continue to smoke and I don't care, it gives me pleasure. I can't stop, I'm going to do this no matter what it costs, as far as my health and all is concerned."
Looking at smokers for example, and the lung disease resulting from smoking, the attitude is "the damage is done and why change? I've been doing it for 20, 30, 40 years now and what difference is it going to make?" It was voiced that those kind of individuals are very hard to change. For those patient's who attempt to make a change for the better, they may try at first but without understanding the outcome or the benefits, making the sacrifice to change becomes too much of an effort and they lapse back into familiar habits.

Other patients may be angry about what's going on and they think they can avoid the problem by avoiding the treatment. Some patients give up, they get disappointed and have no more hope that they will feel better. One participant stated, "I once had a patient and I said, 'why aren't you following what the doctor tells you?' He said, 'what's the sense of doing it, I will die anyway.'" In addition, one participant added that some patients are depressed and have a hard time doing much of anything, especially anything out of the ordinary. They may be able to get up eventually and get dressed and do what is in their
normal routine but making any changes in their own behavior, accepting any interventions is very difficult.

Patient non-compliance may also be attributed to the way in which staff comes across to a patient. If a health care professional comes across in a dominant, controlling manner, the patient who feels provoked by that type kind of attitude might develop non-compliance because of this. A participant added that, "our society is not good at stepping out of their comfort zone to make things a little different, to make the effort to do them."

Patients may have support systems that may not be conducive to assisting patients to comply. Some patients do not have the proper support systems to help them make changes or their support system, supports them not to change. Others that do not have a good support system may not feel accountable to anyone for failing to follow a regimen. "Because they are not accountable, they are more prone to stop following a prescribed regimen." Lastly, cultural expectations may not support some of the things health care professionals attempt to educate patient's on.

Financial issues and resources in general can impede a
patient from complying. Some patients are not able to comply with a regimen due to the cost of their diet or the cost of the medicine they have been prescribed.

"I think resources can have an effect on compliance and non-compliance.

There is consequential non-compliance where the person is just a victim of their circumstances and really does not have the resources and may want to do what they know they are supposed to do and just absolutely can't for on reason or another."

Taking the time to see patients for who they are was a major theme. It is suggested that staff do not want to take the time to sit down with patients to discuss issues. Some patients are fearful of the system and distrustful of it. Spending time with patients to make them comfortable would add to their internalization of information. Viewing this as a "multidisplinary problem", health care providers are not addressing the full picture of the patient. It was suggested that staff needs to examine the patient's whole make up before so they will know what will be the trials and tribulations with the patient or the family. "We need
to examine what makes them tick, what makes them do what they do, their style." Therefore, taking time to get to know the patient versus the health care professional coming in with their own agenda may be helpful.

Staff may come in and due to time constraints, and feel that they must educate the patient in a certain amount of time. The patient may be set up to fail if staff is not aware of all of the dynamics. A patient may be someone who has always been successful and in control and all of a sudden they are sick and feel out of control and this is very difficult to handle. This individual is sick and helpless and they have to depend on somebody else which can be very frustrating. It was stated that frustration may cause a patient to take their anger out on the people who are taking care of them. "Sometimes you assume but do not really understand. If you understand the need and can relate to the patient on that level, the patients might be more compliant".

An interesting comment was made relating to the easy access patients have to the hospital. "They can go in and out of the hospital, sign out against medical advise (AMA)
and get readmitted within 1 hour by calling 911, and come into the hospital by ambulance rather than by their own private car or by bus."

Lastly, one participant asserted that what is non-compliance to a health care professional, may not be non-compliance to a patient. For example, "if a doctor or healthcare professional tells me to do something and I chose not to do it, I don't know, if in my perception, that would be non-compliance. It's non-compliance to the person giving the information - the health care provider is recommending something and the person doesn't follow it, so they are considered non-compliant."

3. What barriers do they face?

Many patients are resistant to make changes in their lives. People become set in their ways and change poses a threat to the normalcy of their routines. These alterations can be very scary, even if it will increase an individual's health status. "People get accustomed to what's normal for them", and may not be willing to take the extra time and energy it would take to comply with a regimen.

Barriers that inhibit a patient to comply may be
internal ones. Sometimes education is well received by the patient but other times they have just made the decision that they will not comply and become their own barrier. In addition, decreased will power, and commitment in addition to low self esteem are all factors that play a role in non-compliance.

Many times patients have good intentions when they receive information, but then 2-3 weeks go by and without any external reinforcement, these patients do not stay on track and they slip back to their normal habits. "There is not enough follow-up designed in our educational programs to allow them to be accountable over a 2-3 month period of time to make a change happen." One participant agreed that there is a lack of reinforcement accorded the patient but feel that it is still the patient's responsibility to follow through, but acknowledged that some patients are able to do this better than others. Patients must be true to themselves and feel the effort is worth it. The question is, how do you reinforce individuals that they are doing a good job?

Support systems may be severely lacking in the
patient's life. The patient may be on their own and there is no one to take care of them or check in with them. A solid support system can provide a patient the drive and motivation to follow through. In some cases though, the support systems that would normally be available to the patient may have "embittered" feelings towards the individual. "The driving feeling is that they did this to themselves and now they can live with it." Others may have negative support systems which reinforce the patient's negative habits. Another interesting comment made by one participant was that "many times if you are seen as non-compliant, people will brush you off. You have already been "x'ed" out so we won't worry about them. So people have these vibes, an attitude against you. You think, 'ok, I won't go back.' So many times it is the way, we as providers, have our notions, or our biases. We may not even realize it." In addition, if the health care professional is the only support system the patient knows, "be it from ethnic, social or gender limitations, then when we are taken out of the picture, the patient's drive or ability to comply is greatly compromised."
A lack of education or knowledge creates barriers to compliance. This can be the responsibility of either staff or the patient. Health care providers may attempt to educate the patient but many times they do not have the time to spend with patients to ensure they have a full understanding of the material. The patient may go home with one understanding that does not align with the original information given which can contribute to non-compliance. If a patient is illiterate and not able to read or understand what staff are relaying, they may become confused or forget and won't go along with the regimen because it is of no use to them and most are too embarrassed to let you know their deficits. Some patients have learning barriers, cognitive deficits that limit their ability to process, understand and retain information. Other patients have a fear of authority figures and institutions. This type of patient is not willing to listen even if they are able to understand the information. Lastly, some patients may experience a health crisis but when it is over they feel everything is going to be fine and they can resume their normal lifestyle. The patient feels they no longer have to
take their medicine or alter their habits. "They don't recognize what caused the problem in the first place."

Cultural barriers may serve to limit compliance. Cultural beliefs can dictate how patient's function within their family unit. It may create a "codependency" type of situation where other cultures may promote more independence. There are differences within cultures in "how they care for the sick, how they care for the disabled and what expectations they place on the sick or disabled individual in the family."

One participant stated that in some cultures the females take care of everything and so the males do not follow through. Problems have also arisen when an examination is scheduled for a woman but because of her cultural belief, she is not supposed to expose herself. In one situation, the husband would not leave the room for fear she would be exposed or something would happen to her. Other cultures have "native or faith healers." The individual is permitted to see a medical doctor only in cases of severe distress. The doctor gives the patient certain instructions for aftercare and it may not fit in
with the patient's way of looking at their illness. This creates a conflict when the patient's culture dictates a contrary regimen.

We are a multicultural society, therefore language barriers exist. Although the hospital has an list of staff interpreters within the hospital, and use of a phone system that has interpreters available, problems may arise if for some reason there is not an interpreter available or known for that language. Sometimes an interpreter with limited language skills may not be able to adequately relay information due to the inability to define particular meanings in that language or due to a different dialect. One staff member stated that sometimes meanings can be completely reversed when trying to interpret information. Also, because information is given mostly in English, health care professionals use medical terminology and "just a level of language that a lot of patients are not familiar with. They are not familiar with the words, the syntax, or the way that you say things so they don't understand."

The ability to comply also depends on the patient's financial resources. Limitations on financial resources can
create an enormous burden in regards to following a regimen. This relates to those patients who also have no insurance benefits or insurance that only covers a portion of what is required. Special diets and treatments, lack of transportation to appointments and monthly medication bills can limit a patient's ability to comply when financial resources are in short supply and when they do not know who to call for help.

Follow up care by health care organizations is also monetarily driven. When the patient transitions from in-patient hospitalization to home, the ability to provide adequate home health and out-patient care can be restricted when organizations must operate within the scope of reimbursement limitations. Sometimes the patient is discharged from service, "basically to fend for themselves" when their insurance benefits are exhausted.

Many of the patients in the hospital are elderly, thus, age and physical limitations become a factor in compliance. These two variables can decrease a patient's ability to understand instructions. In addition, their vision may be reduced, or their hearing impaired. Other patients are
either wheelchair or bed bound. One patient relayed to a participant, "I'm too old, that's fine for a young person to exercise but I'm old and it's not going to do me much benefit." One of the greatest issues facing elderly patients is the reality that because of their age, they will never be restored to the functional level they once knew which can lower their motivation.

Feeling entitled to health care was also a barrier noted by one participant. They addressed this fact by saying, "there is another element to non-compliance, the overriding feeling, even in managed care, that health care is a right and that we are entitled to it and it should be provided for us. There is a lack of personal accountability and responsibility for ensuring that you're getting the things that you need. So, there may be some resource driven reasons but I still see under the advent of managed care a lack of personal accountability; my health is my responsibility, I need to pick up the phone and find out where the resources are that I need and how I can tap into them, instead of waiting for someone to recognize that I don't have the resources and find them for me. There needs
to be more pro-activity on the patient's part too, to take that responsibility for what they know is in their best interest."

**Question 4. How does staff relate to a non-compliant patient?**

The attitude of the health care professional toward the patient may help to ingrain or promote a level of non-compliance. Many staff members responded negatively toward patients they considered non-compliant. Patients were profiled, labeled, ignored, given up on by staff, given a bad reputation due to repeated hospitalizations, seen as unmotivated, written off or "disposed of". It was stated that some staff just don't care. A few staff have become frustrated, irritated or angry and at times have become confrontational with patients, instead of trying to find out what the problems are. Others become disgusted and don't want to deal with the patient. They felt it was the patient's responsibility to comply, that it was their life. One participant stated that some non-compliant patients can be manipulative, so they may be giving you lip service by listening and saying they want to get help but do not have
any intentions of following through. This attitude gets carried over to other staff and therefore they may not do a full assessment of the patient or develop a predisposed idea of a patient who is non-compliant. One participant stated that when this picture is painted in your mind, you're doing an dis-service to the patient because that patient has already been labeled.

When a patient is encountered, at least initially, the staff person may have trouble separating themselves from a non-compliant patient's responses and they may get angry or frustrated. This type of attitude creates a barrier between the patient and the health care provider. It was suggested that health care professionals do a self evaluation where the situation can be looked upon objectively and where the staff person can realize they need not take it personally. In doing so, they may be able to look at the patient and evaluate why they are non-compliant.

"When you have a consistently non-compliant patient and you're spending your time and energy trying to help that person and you're not getting any cooperation, it's hard for staff to keep on trying. All in all, what generally happens
with a non-compliant patient, is the health care system, 
either individual pieces of it, or the whole system in 
general, just gives up on them and they get moved from place 
to place and everybody looses. At some point they are going 
to get lost in the system."

There does not seem to be enough investment toward 
understanding the non-compliant patient. Non-compliance is 
very individualized but when a patient has repeated 
hospitalizations, a reciprocal reaction can occur between 
the patient and health care professional. A level of non­
compliance can develop among the staff person whereby they 
do not try as hard to create changes in the patient. "Staff 
are just trying to do their job and the patient won't let 
them. Very seldom will a staff person step in and go the 
extra mile to help motivate the individual to go on." For 
example, "a patient come in and they are not supposed to 
smoke and they have been in 6 or 7 times during the year. 
There isn't even a question that they are allowed to go 
anywhere they want; no one even discusses it anymore."

One participant stated that some non-compliant patients 
may be angry and it may take awhile to get past what they
are angry about to make any difference in their ability to comply and the staff does not have to time or the patience to wait.

"People, unfortunately, are here for 8 hours, 'just let me do my job and go home'. Then the non-compliant patient falls through the cracks because of the lack of drive on the staff's behalf to motivate the patient to identify the causes or reasons for non-compliance and attempt to resolve it."

In addition, exploring the rational for non-compliance may uncover facts such as when a patient has been hospitalized 4 or 5 times, and you perceive this patient to be non-compliant, then you discover that they can't pay for their medications. The issue of non-compliance could have been reduced or resolved had someone taken the time to look into the patient's situation on the first visit.

Even though some staff are biased toward non-compliant patients, they attempt to communicate with them the best they can. Staff document their interventions, such as the patient's response to the intervention, the encouragement given to the patient and family involvement, etc. One
participant added that occasionally interventions are documented in such a way as to make their paperwork look good when in reality staff did not do anything for the patient. But even with the best intentions, interventions can be hampered depending how aggressive the doctor is in implementing what is being recommended. If the doctor is aggressive in his treatment approach, there seems to be a more team approach in the among the staff. "But if the doctor is passive, 'well, Mr. Smith is kinda like that', then Mr. Smith tends to be treated a little less assertively than somebody the doctor is a little more focused on." In other words, staff become "lax" in their attitude toward the patient.

Other participants felt that staff relates well to non-compliant patients. "They relate better to a non-compliant patient than a compliant one in meeting their demands, but it is the attitude of those patients who are non-compliant." They stay non-compliant in spite of all the repeated instructions and repeated hospitalizations, nothing changes. Some patients are then asked to discuss the issues with their doctor if the patient and health care professional
cannot reach an agreement.

Empathy among staff was also voiced. Patients must be seen as people first. "Whether they comply or not, we are professionals and we have to help them." This may require staff to be more inventive in their approach with the patient to work through certain issues. "If the patient is never able to go to their doctor appointments, and we find out it is because of transportation, then we will try to arrange transportation." Staff must reflect on the reasons they think the patient is non-compliant and then discuss this with the patient. This entails the health care professional "to take matters objectively and try to maintain a calm but firm attitude." Showing a calm and confident attitude makes the patient more comfortable which may reduce non-compliance.

"The idea should be to challenge non-compliant patients to understand them better and when you can understand why they are non-compliant, try to work within their limitations and be more accepting and lower the standard of how they can comply."

Education and communication skills were seen as way
towards reducing the occurrence of non-compliance. This was accomplished in different ways. Staff have been seen to work one on one with patients, giving patients advice, sympathizing with patients, and referring patients to resources within the hospital.

One participant stated that sometimes it takes a number of times and a number of different people and a number of different approaches to get the one staff person that finally clicks with that patient, that makes them realize that it's OK to make a change or that it's time for them to make that change. Giving up on them may be that time when that patient is really ready to make that change.

Length of stay also was seen to have an impact on the health care professionals ability to educate the patient. Limited stays in the hospital reduce the amount of time staff have to educate patients. Staff attempt to provide patients with as much information and education so they will follow through.

Patients may be working against limitations that staff are not aware of. Working with patients to find out if they had received appropriate information and how they were
informed during their last hospitalization helps staff to relate to a patient on their level. Patients are given a lot of critical information that they are expected to retain when they are discharged from the hospital. "How can you retain something in your long term memory that has only been explained to you in 5 minutes?" It was suggested that staff need to break down information into a simpler form, according to the patient's level of understanding. "Maybe what we are trying to teach is too complex." Staff need to examine why the patient was non-compliant during the admission process to get a better picture of where the patient comes from, their personal issues and home life. "We don't have any idea what life is like on the other side for them." Staff, as a team, need to be able to ask themselves "why" when they encounter a non-compliant patient.

Staff also use networking with other staff or the patient's family or caretaker as a way to effectively deal with patient issues. Working with the family or caretaker helps the staff to better understand what the patient likes or dislikes. They can get a better picture of what works at
home or what has worked in the past for this patient. This "historical perspective" allows staff to look for other ways to communicate or help that patient work through some of the issues. Goals can be set when there is cooperation between the patient, health care professional and family member or caretaker.

Staff can accommodate patient treatment goals when they work together effectively. One participant stated that there have been a few times when a nurse has said to her, "what did you say to her because there is a big change here." This individual staff member had a lot more time to spend with the patient to be able to get past what all the barriers were that were causing the non-compliant behavior. Another participant stated that some patients are prejudiced and do not trust certain races. This participant was able to ask someone of the patient's own race help and the patient did not have any complaints and complied with the procedure.

**Question 5 What are the consequences of non-compliance?**

Non-compliance may create complications for the patient, especially in the long run versus the short term.
Medical problems can increase that require readmissions to the hospital, more testing and surgeries. Delays in the healing process may occur which coincide with malnutrition, increased morbidity and mortality, and depression. Diabetic patients are also at special risk. One participant stated diabetics have frequent admissions and when they do not control their disease by medication they can suffer complications of hyperglycemia, which entails worsening vision or blindness, diabetic retinopathy, kidney failure requiring dialysis, amputation of limbs, decreased energy level depression and death. "It's a spiral going down hill."

Sometimes a patient's behavior is a part of their overall makeup and non-compliance is a choice that they are making. But when patients do not make the effort to make changes in their life, there is an overflow effect into their personal life. Emotional problems arise, family life and their job may be affected. "It's a "multi-disciplinary" issue in that health care professionals need to continually educate patients so they do not continually end up back in the doctors office or the hospital."
Another consequence of non-compliance is the way in which staff relates to the patient. Staff develop an "attitude" towards these patients and they do not get the care that they need. If patients do not cooperate, "staff does not have all day to play around" with the individual. These patients are encouraged to discuss these issues with their doctor. With regards to the elderly, they face increasing dependence on the health care system, family members or other people. Staff may be seen as not complying with the needs of this population.

"Our focus is very seldom with regards to promoting that independent lifestyle that the elderly really need. This aspect of their care is frequently ignored. Our education is focused on how they need to do everything as opposed to how they need to remain independent."

There will be conflicts between patients and their families. Patients are continually being told something they do not want to hear and do not want to do. This can produce conflict within the family. Family members or caregivers may become "irritated and discouraged" in dealing with the non-compliant patient. This can create alienation
between the patient and family. Conflicts also arise between staff members as far as how the treatment plan is carried out. Staff members have different approaches in relating to patients whereby the patient may react differently to certain staff members, complying to one request and not to another. Staff may also question their own integrity and become frustrated when they attempt to educate patient's but they keep coming back to the hospital for the same problems. "It's like you're teaching them something but you think you are not doing the right thing because they are not following through. The staff may think there is something they are not doing and that is why the patient is not getting better." This can create a sense of failure within the staff person.

A lack of support from the medical community, the physicians, and hospital staff was also seen as a consequence of non-compliance. "Why should I care about this person that doesn't care enough about themselves to do anything about it and so they get abandoned, to one degree or another. Maybe not flat out abandoned but they don't try as hard for this person that doesn't do anything for
themselves." Lastly, one participant stated that non-
compliance causes an erosion in the health care system; it's
basic mission, objectives and goals.

Financial consequences are a major issue. Taxpayers
must assume the great financial cost when patients do not
follow their regimen. Non-compliant patients become a
burden on the system when they are readmitted to the
hospital or are continually seen by their doctor for the
same problem. Hospitals may be penalized if patients are
admitted to a non-authorized hospital. They may suffer a
reduction in payments or the patient may have to pay a
higher co-pay or deductible. Out patient services have had
to work with insurance companies to extend their coverage
when non-compliance is an issue. When patients are non-
compliant and are no longer eligible for services, it
becomes abandonment if the patient is still greatly in need
of service.

Financial restrictions also become an issue when the
patient does not change their lifestyle in order to improve
their health. "All of a sudden now you can't do what you
used to do. You might not be able to provide for yourself
or your family, so it would really have a financial impact in several different areas."

One participant felt that non-compliant patients get excellent care. They come in "totally sick" and they go through the Intensive Care Unit and the next thing they do is continue with their non-compliant habits "like smoking while they are getting breathing treatments and eating candy while they are getting their insulin injections. The social worker talks to them to try and help them with their problems, the dietician goes and talks to them about their problems, and if the patient has pulmonary problems, cardio pulmonary talks to them. But they are still non-compliant and are not going to change."

**Question 6 What are the benefits of non-compliance?**

This was a particularly interesting question as participants at first appeared puzzled. But then many were able to focus on the times they have been non-compliant and relate these benefits to the patients they serve.

A minority of participants felt that non-compliance was not worthy of any benefits unless, in the end, it was able to turn the patient around for the better. One participant
stated that non-compliance may push the patient to the worse they can get which will finally wake them up and create motivation to change. Another participant stated that individuals should care, and if these individuals were caring people they would know they were non-compliant and be aware of what should have been done on their part.

Patients should be educated on their options for treatment and only when they opt to decline all options presented, and continue the road they are on, should they be considered non-compliant. One participant stated if patients are presented with only one option, and told "this is what you have to do" and they decline, this should not be termed non-compliance. Also, some health care professionals have not taken the time to listen to the patient when they decline a treatment, medication etc., and because of this are quickly labeled non-compliant as opposed to an individual who knows and understands what is best for them. "That patient, in refusing to follow doctor's orders or treatments is basically looking out for the well being of themselves."

A majority of participants felt that non-compliance was
a way that patients were able to take control over their illness, "to doctor themselves" versus giving up control to someone else. It was a decision based on a control or power issue or in some situations, to try other treatment alternatives. The domain of alternative medicine was discussed as an area wide open for the non-compliant patient. "There are alternatives available now, whether their efficacy and effectiveness are proven or not proven because the motivations behind non-compliance is one of authority and control issues. So the fact that they make the choice for any avenue for assistance is a positive one." One participant felt that patient's should always have a choice accepting a treatment option, but then have to be okay with their choice and the consequences it may bring for themselves and whom ever else this choice may effect. Along the same lines, it was voiced that patients who desire alternative treatments should always discuss this with a health care professional first to make sure that it is a viable option.

Non-compliance was also a way to manipulate an individuals family or environment through their illness. "If
you don't have that illness anymore you might not have a tool to do the manipulation you want to do. Somebody that has trouble breathing and everybody panics when they can't breath, if they give up smoking and get healthy, they no longer have control over others around them where everyone had to rush in and fix it." In essence, the patient can continue their "habits, vices, and inappropriate lifestyle choices."

Cultural beliefs may dictate the way in which patients comply with regimens. Participants felt that patients should voice cultural concerns they have with staff to test the validity of their beliefs. For example, one participant shared that there was a child who was diabetic and their parents wanted to have this child drink carrot juice which they believed would control their child's blood sugar and make the diabetes go away. This was not a viable option and staff were able to educate the parents on appropriate options. This is also a way to challenge staff and study more of what they are dealing with. It gives them more experience to deal with a diverse population and personalities. "We cannot always have patients that agree
Another participant stated that not all recommendations are good, so non-compliance may be a good thing, at least temporarily if it allows the patient to make their own decision by asking more questions and then in the long run be more compliant. Or the patient may find out that they were given the wrong information or new information about a certain treatment was discovered that was actually detrimental to a person's health. For example, one participant discussed the information that came out about Phen/Phen. Non-compliance would have been a benefit for a person who declined to take this drug. Non-compliance may also benefit those patients who are very well read and very understanding of their disease process. They have a well founded understanding of what "medications, treatment modalities or protocols are most effective." "Doctors and nurses are not 'God', they don't always have the right information." In addition, occasionally health care professionals will see an acceleration in the healing process because restrictions have been too stringent.

"I think it takes a very sophisticated, educated
person, very knowledgeable and in tune with themselves, a
different kind of personality to have beneficial kind of
non-compliance. There may be those people that can
recognize when something that has been told to them is not
right. However, in the case of physicians who are the most
knowledgeable in our healthcare system, they are the worst
patients in the world."

One participant stated they were more of a negotiator
than a non-compliant person. This person disagrees with the
health care professional on the front end and together they
come to a conclusion as to what might be best for their
health and what will fit with their lifestyle. Therefore,
the doctor has their agreement that they will follow through
with a regimen. They have been proactive with their health
care.

Patients may benefit from being non-compliant whereby
they receive more attention from health care professionals,
but it was noted to be negative attention. With this in
mind though, staff may be reinforcing that behavior.

On the other hand, staff may ignore patient's
complaints which can lead to major complications. One
participant stated that non-compliant patients were an irritation to the medical staff. "In a hospital environment, you get rid of the patient who is a pain and a hindrance and everyone feels relieved when they leave."

Teaching approaches by staff are challenged by non-compliant patients. This type of patient gives staff an opportunity to get in there and get to know the patient and work through the issues and try to work as a team to meet the needs and be better in the future in handling issues that come up because they have had to work through situations.

"When we take time to listen we can frequently address the issues that are there and identify the resources, support groups, and other elements that would be key in the patient's success."

One participant stated when they work with patients with regards to oxygen treatments, the focus is on the fact that the patient wants to be independent, they want to do the things that they used to do. "So this oxygen treatment, this cannula around your head or your face is not to tie you to home but rather to get them out of the house so they can
go out to dinner with their husband, wife, family, or children, or fly across the country and do more than they have done in the past due to their disease process."

Organizations may benefit from non-compliant patients on the "front end" in regards to capitation. Non-compliance may help to keep the patient's care profitable because non-compliant patients do not make appointments, do not fill prescriptions etc., therefore that is not money coming out of the system. But what happens is that this patient ends up hospitalized and costs much more on the "back end".

7. What are some proposed solutions to non-compliance?

A major theme that was discussed was that health care professionals need to have a better understanding of what the patient's life has been like. Taking the time to sit down with the patient and do an intensive assessment may uncover background information that is better uncovered in the beginning of their hospitalization, rather than shortly before their discharge and finding out they cannot or will not comply with the regimen. Lack of transportation, no phone or just wanting the opportunity to care for their own needs may be obstacles professionals face. Financial issues
may also play a role in non-compliance. If staff expects a diabetic patient to adhere to a 1200 calorie diet, then it is imperative to know that the patient can only afford "beans, lard and flour tortillas". If staff are able to discover what the issues are, what the patient's home life is like and what is preventing the patient to comply with a regimen, it might be possible to look at alternative options that would work better with their life style and increase their ability to comply. "This is what we want to offer you and this is what would be best for you, but how is this going to work for you?"

"I think it's scary for staff to change the way we approach patients because due to time constraints and patient load, we develop a method that is efficient for us and to have to change that method, stop and redo something- to take time to figure out what's going on with the patient takes more time and energy and creative thought on our part."

Listening to the patient is key to understanding what the issues are to non-compliance. Just doing 10 minutes of basic care on a patient and asking simple questions like
"what works for you in this setting?" can yield information that their doctor was not aware of in years of caring for this patient. When the patient can verbalize what the issues are in their life, what they understand of their illness, and what has been discussed with them as a plan of treatment, staff have a greater chance of understanding where the patient stands. Once you have gained the trust and respect of the patient, there is a possibility of coming up with a new term instead of non-compliance and see it as the patient's choice even if we do not agree.

Taking a more "passive or subordinate" stance may help to bridge obstacles regarding issues of independence. Establishing a "rapport", while remaining objective, especially with elderly patients may allow staff to work closer to them and preventing them to otherwise "tune out" what was being said. One participant felt that some elderly have the mindset of, "I'm not going to let that young kid tell me what to do." They went on to say that if we approach them with respect and understanding, listening to their concerns, frequently the issue of non-compliance can be side-stepped.
"Staff needs to work with the patient on what the possible things they can do to help themselves. We need to work with the patient's limitations - that maybe they can be compliant with 5 things but not with 10 things. Staff need to be more intuned with what the patient is capable of doing to comply. I think the professional needs to be less narcissistic about what they think is best for the patient and sit with them and get participation in what is realistic for that patient and see if they can get their attention and their needs met in a more positive way."

Using a team approach, with a variety of professionals to discuss the patient's issues is well worth the effort to provide the patient with the care they need and also prevent them from abusing the system. Providing ongoing monitoring and communication to the patient to answer questions and intervene when cultural or language issues arise may help to reduce non-compliance. Multidisplinary rounds are key to identifying and dealing with non-compliance issues.

"Generally, in a group of 4 to 5 team members, there is always one individual who has found the key to the problems which are relating to the elements of non-compliance. So if
one person has identified the way into the patient's heart or understanding and sharing that with the rest of the team, this facilitates everyone's ability to work with the patient and deter or turn around the elements of non-compliance."

Having patient care conferences that allow staff to discuss issues, specifically when they are not making "head way" with a patient, may help staff to figure out new approaches. Creating a "forum" among peers and problem solving together helps to generate new ideas. If needed, other health care professionals can be utilized that have expertise in certain areas, depending on the issues involved.

Patients may take an independent stance in their life, an attempt to be autonomous and assert their rights. They may voice their "needs and wants" and this may perceived as non-compliance. The patient may not want to comply, feeling they will lose their individuality, or leverage with their environment. Mental illness or their emotional makeup may be a factor in their defiance. One health care professional stated there is an increase in patient's signing out against medical advise (AMA) on the 1st and 15th
of the month because their social security checks have been mailed out. They need to pay their bills, so in this case, if they are physically able, patients should be granted a pass so they can go home for a couple of hours, take care of their business and then return to the hospital. This would also be appropriate if there were an emergency. "Since the law does not allow them to go out on a pass, they sign out AMA and become non-compliant in spite of their desire to comply." Health care professionals cannot limit care or write these individuals off because staff perceives them to be non-compliant. "We must give these individuals permission to be that way even if the health care professionals do not totally accept it."

The need to improve communication due to cultural factors may play a role in non-compliance. Asking a patient to make a change in their life that is against their culturally beliefs may prevent the patient from complying. It may be the patient's self interpretation of what they should comply with, a misunderstanding because of their culture.

"If a culture says that fat people are desirable and
the fatter you are the more prosperous you are, more prestige you have in your culture and your doctor comes in and says you have to lose weight because it is putting stress on your heart, it is not going to make any sense to them, so you have to get around that cultural difference by educating them on the reasons why this is so important while recognizing that this cultural issue is important."

Health care professionals must be able to use problem solving skills in order to help patients realize the benefits of following a regimen. It is necessary to find out what their life style is like and "individualize the benefits for them." Using creativity, explore why they're having a difficult time and help them overcome those problems on an individual basis. This may save time in the long run. One staff member suggested that instructions need to be communicated by using pictures, if necessary, which may help those who cannot read or have a language barrier.

One participant stated that another key issue is to acknowledge the non-compliance with the patient. Let them know that you know they are being non-compliant and what your seeing as the non-compliance issues and whether they
are aware of it. If a patient is not willing to comply with one regimen, they may be willing to verbalize what they are willing to comply with.

Non-compliance may also be addressed by education. First, staff must be educated and aware of the differences among individuals. Health care professionals then need to help the patient to understand the reasons behind what is being recommended which may take a long time. Very few individuals will take the time needed to explain the treatment plan. The doctor comes in and says "this is what you need and this is why you need it" and leaves. The nurse may explain it a little more but maybe not adequately for the patient to understand. One participant added that looking at the "staff matrix" on the floor, there is not a lot of time to get out there and educate patients as much as it is needed. There are many constraints staff are up against which makes it so important to be creative in their approach.

"I would think the main factors would be trying to educate in terms that the patient can understand. The appropriate language, words in that language, and what the
patient's priorities are - what outcomes to they see - and how to blend their recommended treatment into those priorities." Therefore, the ability to identify non-compliance, how to ask questions, create and introduce solutions and spending more time with the patient may help in the education process. This includes the patient's doctor who must speak with the patient so they can anticipate what the treatment process will be. "If you don't know what's going on and someone walks in and starts doing things without you knowing, you will be kind of afraid, but if the doctor explains what will happen before doing a procedure, the patient will buy into the program more." Another participant added:

"Have the patient verbalize and list the effects of non-compliance. Maybe that would make it real for them. Let's say you have a neighbor that has this situation. What do you think the effects will be, what is real to them as far as the effects. Take it away from them and have them objectify it a little bit more and then turn it around and say 'do you realize that this situation applies to you?' Is it important to you?"
Many participants felt that taking a proactive stance in order to prevent non-compliance is needed. This would be accomplished through community programs that address health issues. Visiting school sites and focusing on the need to take responsibility for ones' own health needs, and seeing this as a process throughout the life span, thus avoiding major problems in the future is needed. Senior centers and health clinics are also a target for involvement. There is a need to address issues such as drug education, lifestyle changes and the like. In addition, self esteem issues are an important topic. Focusing on specific issues in people's lives, how they can make their own choices, and what type of choices they should make is needed. In addition, there would be more time to discuss these topics in these settings "versus 10 minutes in the doctors office where the patient is given a prescription and out the door they go." Once they are in the hospital it is very difficult to make major changes unless there is someone that is caring and wants to sit down and listen to the patient.

"I think as health care providers, we need to get out there in the community and encourage community educational
programs. I think that by the time patients hit the door, they are on their way out the door and so therefore we don't have the time to educate our patients in regards to their compliancy. I think the key would be to get out there in the community, doctors offices, schools etc. and be a little more proactive in regards to education.

Lastly, follow-up care was seen as a deterrent to non-compliance. Addressing a patient's accountability by making verbal or written agreements and encouraging them to adhere to a certain regimen may increase compliance. Using home health or social workers to contact patients at home by phone or in person to make sure the patient understands the instructions correctly is important. One participant stated that they had made a home visit and a patient was not taking their medicine because he was told he could not smoke and he was going to smoke so this was something the nurse and patient had to work out together. If the home health nurse had not gone out, the patient would not have taken his medicine, his ulcer would have gotten worse and eventually he would have been readmitted to the hospital.

One last comment was voiced:
"Some type of mechanism is needed to monitor improvement in non-compliant patients. Maybe someone has been non-compliant 100% of the time and now they are non-compliant 70% of the time.

Well, that is an improvement that you can build on. You can definitely build on someone that is trying to change their behavior instead of someone who is totally determined to not change."
ROUND TABLE SUMMARY

Overview

Upon completion of the draft, this researcher sought to "test the credibility of the inquiry" (Erlandson et al., 1993). To do this, an outline was developed that attempted to highlight the main constructions established by the participants. The outline was given to the sixteen remaining participants for their review and a round table meeting was scheduled for one week later to discuss the results. Participants were encouraged to be prepared to offer their feedback, suggestions, or revisions as they felt appropriate, in writing and verbally.

The meeting was held in a conference room in the hospital. Four out of the sixteen participants attended. The completed draft was also available for review if there were any concerns or questions about the information in the outline. The meeting lasted approximately 45 minutes and all four participants, in addition to this researcher, participated in the discussion. The outline was discussed, question by question. Recommendations were sought as to the validity of the themes.
DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Overall, the feedback was positive as participants relayed the information was appropriate, accurate and confirmed many of the issues that staff were already aware of. Participants agreed on the definition of non-compliant patient's and the many components of this phenomenon. Discussions focused around the issues of staff and patient responsibility, caregiver burnout, education on prevention and self esteem issues and lastly, the complexity of this phenomenon.

Participants also felt that many of the patient's needs were not being addressed in the decision making process. This also included cultural and language barriers. Expectations were placed upon patients without looking at everything that may be impacting their lives. Neglecting to observe the pressures patients may be facing could very well indicate that patients are seeing staff as judgmental or not caring about them, only the regimen they are being asked to follow. It was agreed that some staff become "disengaged" toward non-compliant patients and a lack of time adds to their anger or frustration which may enhance a patient's
non-compliant behavior. It was brought to light that there was not a general consensus throughout the hospital, that some staff become angry or frustrated when a patient is non-compliant. Many staff voiced that they were "shocked" that some staff would behave in this manner. Staff are seen to be working against limitations and constraints, at times, that inhibit their ability to completely attend to the patient's totality of needs.

One participant reiterated that there is a perception of "entitlement" to health care. For example, if a patient has diabetes and decides he/she does not want to follow their diet, they can eat whatever they want, have their blood sugar soar out of control, and come back to the hospital and they will "fix it for me." Patients must take responsibility in their own health care needs, but the question was how this would be successfully accomplished. Problem solving is a key issue that takes time by staff and the ability to gain the trust of the patient so they feel comfortable to express their concerns. It is very important to negotiate short term and long term goals with the patient in an attempt to educate them on their health care needs and
that wellness is a process that assumes responsibility on
the part of the patient and health care professional alike.

It was expressed that the scope of this issue extends
beyond the patient, in that breaking the cycle of non-
compliance is difficult and for those caregivers of non-
compliant patients. Hospitalization or other out of home
placement, for health related needs, provides a needed break
from the patient. Caregivers become isolated and drained of
energy in their attempts to provide for the patient's
constant needs or efforts to get the patient to comply to
their regimen. The patient is "well taken care in the
hospital, gets three meals a day and is medically
stabilized." Occasionally, for the caregiver who has dealt
with the patient for a long time, hospitalization becomes a
final shift of responsibility where the caregiver chooses to
sever their caregiving obligations and the healthcare
professional is given the challenge to secure out of home
placement for this patient.

Participants felt that follow-up services and
education focused on prevention and self esteem issues are
extremely important in order for patients to comply with
medical regimens that they may have to follow for the rest of their lives. One participant runs a support group and felt that compliance is directly related to the way patients feel about themselves and this can vary week to week, month to month. Participants were able to relate to this intimately as stories were shared about personal experiences and how their moods directly effect their willingness to comply with even voluntary matters, such as a diet or an exercise routine. Having the extra support, post hospitalization, when the patient can be in a vulnerable state and can decide to either follow through or not is when follow-up services could benefit the patient the most.

All participants agreed that non-compliance is a complex issue that will not be remedied over night but health care professionals must take the first step to assess the patient using a "systems" perspective to accurately address the many barriers patients face and through trust, confrontation, education, negotiation, support and accountability, patients may acquire the internal and external support they need in order to perceive compliance as a necessary component to a healthy future.
Review of the above results confirms the researchers initial working hypotheses, as listed in Figure 1 page 11, that education, shared decision making, increased understanding by staff, viewing the patient in a holistic manner and follow-up services are all measures that can open communication between patient and healthcare professionals and thus increase compliance.

**Discussion**

*Fit of Constructivism to This Inquiry*

The main goal of this study was to "demonstrate that stakeholders have been empowered, educated, and connected with the constructions of other stakeholders in the social context to promote a richer level of understanding and insight for all participants" (Erlandson et al., 1993). The advantage of using constructivist research is the ability to develop a "theoretical understanding" (Rubin & Babbie, 1996) of your observations in order to formulate a conceptual framework in which to understand the phenomenon under study. Constructivism seemed well suited to explore the issues of non-compliance within a hospital setting and demonstrated at the conclusion of the study that indeed participants showed
a commitment to share their thoughts, concerns, and ideas with the researcher and each other. The hope is that new perspectives on non-compliance will be facilitated through this process that will in turn improve the interactions between healthcare professionals and patient's with the goal of reducing the occurrence of non-compliance.

Emergent Themes

Many themes emerged that focused on the need for increased education for patients and staff, cultural and language issues, apathy among patients and staff, issues related to support systems, financial and resource issues, and lastly, staff limitations and constraints. These themes surfaced in all seven questions. In addressing the problems of non-compliance, it became clear that approaching a solution(s) is a complex, multifaceted issue that must take many variables into account. Although this study is focused on the micro-level, attempting to address these issues only on a micro-level would do an injustice given the severity and scope of the problem. Indeed, macro-level issues emerge based on the impact that non-compliance has on families, institutions, financial implications and the health and
welfare of the patient. Just as policies guide a society's thoughts and feelings on a particular issue, so does our definition of non-compliance. We define the term non-compliance within a certain framework which guides our perceptions and actions. We may short change ourselves in the long run by taking a stubborn or apathetic stance to non-compliance if we take a "we" versus "them" attitude. Our thoughts and feelings will be focused on a straight and narrow path rather than relating these non-compliance issues to our own lives. Every participant admitted to being non-compliant, to some degree, at one time or another, in their life. Attempting to negatively judge another's situation only serves to shorten our attention and tolerance towards either redefining what non-compliance means or looking at the many issues that can create non-compliance.

Many factors help to shape and sway an individual's opinion. One person's opinion is a part of a much larger puzzle that includes our past and present experiences, how the people we associate with think, how our community approaches the subject and how newspapers and the media project opinions. Just as constructivist research seeks to
reduce all data to the smallest "unit" of information that will stand alone, this researcher believes that non-compliance should be accorded the same scrutiny so patterns can emerge and be treated individually, on their own merit. This may assist healthcare professionals to focus their recommendations and/or solutions to non-compliance to the appropriate and specific areas versus profiling each non-compliant patient as the same.

Comparison of Findings and Literature Review

The research results showed considerable consistency comparing it to the literature review. Although the literature review described issues in greater detail, participants expressed many of the same concerns from the perspective of their interactions with patients at the hospital. As cited earlier in the review, a patient's beliefs in the value of the regimen and their ability to overcome practical barriers to adherence seem to be a starting point that only touches the surface of this phenomenon. The issues discussed in the literature review extend beyond the hospital setting and into the community where much of non-compliant behavior takes place.
Healthcare professionals must deal with the consequences when the patient is hospitalized and this pattern of behavior has a major impact in many areas discussed in earlier sections.

Participants were cognizant of the many variables that either lead to or reinforce non-compliant behavior but only briefly mentioned how managed care plays into this issue. This researcher believes that managed care will continue to play a greater role in how healthcare professionals deal with non-compliant patients and how they may be compelled to look for creative, "cutting edge" measures to engage individuals at a younger age to develop a passion for a healthy lifestyle, just as any other institution in our society sets out with an advertising campaign in an attempt to engage its target population with its product.

Limitations of the Study

Constructivism is an alternative paradigm which seeks to understand a phenomenon, not to measure it. It may show patterns and relationships but not cause and effect. The tools to measure the phenomenon are developed by the researcher, which may include observations and open ended
questions, whereas the more traditional paradigms base their results on rigorous sampling and standardized measurements. Because of the subjective nature of the inquiry, information gained is less generalizable to other similar sites of inquiry. Specific issues may be common characteristics to one institution but cannot in anyway infer the same characteristics exist in another similar institution. Erlandson (1993), states that "no true generalization is really possible; all observations are defined by the specific contexts in which they occur." Because of this, the constructions that emerged may have relevance in another hospital due to shared characteristics, but in no way are these results equivalent to other institutions. Differences can be significant when variables such as the location and demographics of the community, patient population mix and staff characteristics are considered. Conducting a similar study, called "expansion research", may help to strengthen the generalizability of the results but cannot be deemed as "replication" as in traditional research.

**Suggestions For Further Research**

Using a constructivist paradigm opens the doors for
further research in other acute care hospitals in the attempt to form a level of consensus regarding non-compliant patients and how healthcare professionals define the various aspects of this phenomenon. Because the literature review was, for the most part, based on quantitative studies, it would be interesting to continue this qualitative endeavor in other areas of the community, comparing constructions, in an effort to rule out specific concerns that are distinct to one area. Considering the fact that non-compliance is a symptom of issues beyond the scope of this paper, this type of research could continue in many other healthcare settings. Also, this research only addressed a select number of key questions. Questions are the instrument to exploring other areas of concern which will open the door and lead to a greater understanding of non-compliant behavior. I hope that as managed care extends greater responsibility on the patients they serve that a shift in perception and definition of non-compliance can take place. Creative ways to support patients need to be developed that will afford the patient autonomy without sacrificing their health while still perserving the dwindling healthcare
Implications For Social Work Practice

The constructions expressed by the participants addressed a range of opinions and concerns and confirm this researcher's construction that non-compliance is a phenomenon that must be viewed on a continuum and from how we perceive and define non-compliance. With the economic pressures of managed care patient compliance is becoming an increasingly important factor in the delivery of cost-effective health care. Mechanisms for examining the causes in order to reduce non-compliance are key. Because the root of non-compliant behavior is different for each individual, identifying the relationships between the patient's lifestyle and factors that may trigger non-compliance must be acknowledged so healthcare professionals understand why patients are making these choices. There needs to be a shift in emphasis and focus toward how health professionals can learn to contribute effectively to patient decision making, for example, by tailoring their advice so that it fits into patients' existing beliefs and expectations and takes into account the constraints imposed by individuals'
everyday lives. Effective strategies will require healthcare professionals to work as a team, in the true sense of the word, so each staff member is able to best utilize his/her skills in order to properly diagnoses the reasons for the patient's non-compliance. Healthcare professionals can encourage, preach, even argue their position, but in the end, it is the patient, in his/her own environment, who will decide what direction to take.

Addressing the needs of a non-compliant patient can be taxing when healthcare professionals already express a lack of time to spend with patients. Using a systems perspective, hospital social workers are in a prime position and well equipped to effectively approach this issue. They have the skills to provide education, counseling, and communicate to patients with a multitude of problems. Social workers can act as mediators between the patient and staff and search out interventions that will impact and enhance patients' ability to adhere to their prescribed regimens. Assessing the patient within their environment can lead to better communication and coordinated efforts in
an effort to provide comprehensive services, with the end goal of increased compliance.
APPENDIX A - INFORMED CONSENT

Dear participant,

You have been asked to participate in a study on non-compliant patients. The purpose of this study is to understand the various perspectives on non-compliant patients by hospital staff, in key departments, within the hospital setting. At the end of the study, it is hoped that a common understanding can be reached, and solutions proposed, to reduce the occurrence of non-compliance.

This study has been approved by the Cal State San Bernardino Institutional Review Board. This study will be conducted by an interview process by one graduate student interviewer, Barbara Smith. You will not be asked to fill out any questionnaires or surveys. Tape recorders may be used, unless you oppose. Your honesty in answering questions is of utmost importance. It is also an important aim to keep an open mind about how your perceptions may change during this study. After your information is analyzed, you will be asked to review it for accuracy. Initial interviews will take approximately one to two hours at the most. If time permits, one additional interview may
There will be approximately five to ten other participants in this study. These participants will consist of one (maybe two) people from key departments within the hospital. Although your name will be kept confidential, the information you share, will then be shared among all other participants. Each participant will have the chance to share their perspective on the non-compliant patient, whereby each successive participant will review the previous participants' perspectives. At the end of the study, all participants will be asked to attend a roundtable meeting to hopefully come to some common understanding of what non-compliance means and what steps can be taken to reduce non-compliance, as noted above. A final draft of the study would then be provided for your review. Total participation time will be approximately five hours.

I understand that your time is valuable so all interviews will be held at your convenience. You also may withdraw from the study at any time, even after interviews have been completed. You would have the option of withdrawing the information you shared also, or allow this
information to be used with complete confidentiality. If at any time you have questions or concerns, you may contact my advisor Dr. McCaslin, at (909)880-5507, or myself, at 880-5501. If you are agreeable to participate in this study, under the above conditions, please sign below. I appreciate your time and information.

Sincerely,

Barbara Smith

Name ________________________________ Date _________
APPENDIX B - DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

Thank you for taking part in this study and contributing your views on non-compliant patients. All information that you have shared and any observations I may have made will be documented to the best of my ability and resubmitted to you for your clarification. Any information that you disagree with or change your mind about will be deleted. The goal of this study is to share perceptions on patient non-compliance between yourself and other hospital employee's. It is hoped that by reaching a consensus that patient non-compliance can be reduced.

I will be contacting you in the near future to review the information from our interview. If you have any questions or concerns about this study before this time you may contact myself or my adviser, Dr. McCaslin.

Barbara Smith

Dr. Rosemary Mc Caslin

Thank you again for your participation in this study.
APPENDIX C - INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is your definition of a non-compliant patient?
2. Why do you think patient's are non-compliant?
3. What barriers do they face?
4. How does staff relate to a non-compliant patient?
5. What are the consequences of non-compliance?
6. What are the benefits of non-compliance?
7. What are some proposed solutions to non-compliance?
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Coons, Stephen Joe. et al. (1994). "Predictors of Medication Noncompliance in a Sample of Older Adults" Clinical Therapeutics Vol.16, No.1 110-116


