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Blister Packaging Medication to Increase Treatment Adherence and Clinical Response: Impact on Suicide-Related Morbidity and Mortality

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**CURRENT RESEARCH:
Examining the impact of blister packaging medications**

Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 19 Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Center (MIRECC)

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Study Description and Background

Medication overdoses account for substantial numbers of suicide-related behaviors. Non-adherence is a significant issue for those with psychiatric illness.

Non-adherence is defined as not having prescriptions filled, not taking enough medication, taking too much medication, not observing the correct interval between doses and taking additional non-prescribed medications (Bosworth et al., 2005).

Psychiatric problems linked to non-adherence include greater risks of psychiatric hospitalizations, increased use of emergency psychiatric services, arrests, violence, victimization, poorer mental functioning, less life satisfaction, and increased substance use.

Blister packs facilitate adherence tracking. Patients respond more positively to simple dosing and blister packages are a good way to simplify the regimen.

Blister packages are believed to slow down the process of intentional overdose, increasing the time required may be significant enough to dissuade someone from taking a lethal overdose, or may result in patients taking fewer pills per overdose.

Blister packaging is ultimately associated with significant improvement in treatment adherence.

Hypotheses, Study Aims, and Short-term Goals

The primary aims of this study are to:

- 1) determine if patients in the Blister Pack (BP) condition have better treatment adherence with their regular prescription medications.
- 2) determine if patients in the BP condition have fewer overdoses.
- 3) explore if patients in the BP condition report less symptom distress, fewer negative medical/psychiatric outcomes, and have lower health care utilization.



Progress Report

We are currently recruiting and enrolling participants.

Long-term Goals: Putting Research into Practice

We hope that the findings from this study will positively impact suicide prevention efforts and will provide data on a specific intervention to increase medication adherence and restrict access to lethal means.

Additionally we hope that the benefits of adherence will result in:

- overall symptom improvement;
- decreased levels of distress; and
- greater ability to benefit from non-medication interventions such as psychotherapy.

