

# Chronic diseases, 4 out of 10 patients do not follow the treatments

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Almost 4 out of 10. There are many patients with one or more chronic diseases who do not adhere to therapies in the correct way. The reasons? Almost half forget to take them (47%), well over a third fear the side effects (40%) and there is also 12% who decide to interrupt them when they have no obvious symptoms, underestimating their disease. But that's not all: for one patient out of 4, the health service is not always able to guarantee treatments, and of these, 28% report difficulties in maintaining contact with the medical centre. The data emerges from a survey conducted on over 1,500 people by Anmar Onlus (National Association of Rheumatic Patients) for a new national communication campaign entitled "I join, what are you doing?".

## Technology that helps

Also according to the survey, a solution to these problems could come from technology, already well tested during the pandemic: in fact, for 86% of the sample interviewed, using an app could be helpful, and for 72% also telemedicine: over 60% declare that they can independently manage a program of this type. Obviously, technologies do not replace medical visits, and in general 87% believe that more information is needed from doctors, specialists and non-specialists, and from patient associations.

Ulcerative colitis, a new oral drug to improve adherence to therapy by Letizia Gabaglio 04 April 2023

## **A public health problem**

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Hence the importance of the new campaign launched by Anmar and presented today in Rome. The initiative, carried out with the unconditional contribution of Galapagos, provides for the creation of a television commercial, the dissemination of a booklet and a communication activity on social media. There are many recipients: over 40% of Italians over 18 have at least one chronic disease: not only elderly people but also young adults with a long life expectancy. “Therapeutic adherence is a large and growing public health problem – underlines Silvia Tonolo, President of ANMAR -. Chronic patients who do not take their medications correctly often follow the doctor’s instructions with discontinuity, or abandon the treatment after a short time. The phenomenon can be very dangerous for the health of the individual”. According to Tonolo, there is also a need for greater collaboration between the various health professionals, from the service pharmacy to the specialist. Many patients, in fact, take more drugs and are followed up by various doctors who are not always aware of how many and which therapies the patients take: “The new information technologies can help us in this too, even if so far their use has been scarce and it should therefore be encouraged”.

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## **The role of the family doctor**

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The survey also reveals that just 13% of patients receive support from their general practitioner to improve adherence to care. “It is a fact that must be improved as soon as possible – comments Silvestro Scotti, National Secretary General FIMMG / Italian Federation of Family Doctors -. We can and should play a greater role in the management of chronic conditions. Thanks to innovation, both diagnostic and therapeutic, often fatal diseases are now kept under control for long periods of time. Hence the need for greater support from the Italian primary care system”.

Arthritis: 1 out of 3 patients does not follow Irma D’Aria’s therapies correctly 26 June 2023

## **Oral therapies aid adherence**

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For 68% of the patients interviewed, a different way of taking medicines would also be useful to encourage adherence: “For example, in rheumatology we are witnessing the transition from biotechnological drugs, administered subcutaneously, to oral therapies – adds Mauro Galeazzi, Head science of the CAPIRE Observatory -. They are effective and safe therapies such as those given in hospitals and which can also be taken comfortably at home. More generally, patient care is changing and access to hospital wards may be limited. Also following the experience of Covid-19 we have understood how telemedicine is an important resource to be exploited”.

## **The role of pharmacies**

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In this scenario, pharmacies come into play, which can favor the proximity of treatments, as recalled by Claudia Pietropoli, Member of the Presidential Council of Federfarma Nazionale and President of Federfarma Rovigo: “We are already involved in some Regions in the dispensing of drugs for the treatment of various chronic diseases, more or less serious. However, our role shouldn’t be limited to this and indeed it should also be strengthened with a view to improving and encouraging adherence”.

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Encouraging correct adherence to therapies is also a question of rationalizing healthcare costs. “A patient who follows the therapies more scrupulously allows for significant economic savings – notes Roberto Messina, Senior President of Federanziani -. We can quantify them at over 11 billion euros a year, deriving from the reduction of adverse events, the drop in access to emergency rooms, the decrease in hospitalizations and the lowering of pharmaceutical expenditure. It is therefore a precise duty of all the actors involved in the health sector to favor it as much as possible”.