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Meeting Abstract

Is splitting tablets an appropriate method to save medical costs?

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Text

Context: Patients in the health care system split larger dosed tablets increasingly more frequently to save costs. However, patients report that they have difficulties during splitting.

Aim of the study: For this reason the following study will examine precisely how patients can split tablets and if illustrations improve this procedure.

Material and method: Tablets of different shapes and sizes were selected from five medicines. Only one of the accompanying original package inserts contained a tablet dividing illustration. In addition, model package inserts were developed which contained an illustration to describe how to split the tablet. Each tablet was split by a minimum of 20 patients using either the original or the model package insert. Specialists then examined the uniformity of each tablet half using the European Pharmacopoeia 2.9.5 method.

Results: When the original package inserts were used it was found that none of the tablets were adequately split according to the European Pharmacopoeias' 2.9.5 method. Furthermore, only one tablet was adequately split using the illustration from a model package insert. In addition to the slight improvement in dividing the tablets, splitting was significantly faster when illustrations were used and participants also felt significantly better informed by them.

However, despite the difficulties ascertained when splitting tablets, patients stated that they would divide tablets in order to reduce their dividend of the costs.

Conclusion: For safety reasons, it is recommended that patients should only split tablets if an accurate split is absolutely guaranteed. Including an illustration to describe the dividing procedure for each individual tablet package insert is additionally suggested.

However, these results illustrate that generally dividing tablets to save medical costs is not recommended.