

ACTHIV ChangeMakers: Simplifying Antiretroviral Regimens Through Pharmacist-led Interventions

Authors: Ilona Guerra, PharmD, AAHIVP; Daniel Listiyo, PharmD Candidate 2024; Victoria Briggs, PharmD Candidate 2026; Glory Garcia, PharmD Candidate 2026

Background:

People with HIV often have several comorbid conditions resulting in increased pill burden. At Legacy Community Health, pharmacists have an opportunity to make interventions through a therapeutic interchange protocol with in-house providers. However, our process included several steps that needed to be refined and this presented a leadership opportunity for our pharmacists. Our aim was to streamline how patients may be switched to a simpler medication regimen that decreases pill burden and optimizes adherence.

Methods:

Using an adaptive leadership framework, the team identified a therapeutic interchange opportunity for patients who are taking Descovy + Prezcoibix. These patients may benefit from switching to a single medication: Symtuza.

The phrase "Adaptive Leadership" is model coined by Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky. A key step in this model is differentiating technical problems from adaptive challenges and applying different approaches to create solutions. Adaptive challenges require people to challenge the status quo and adopt an experimental mindset.

By applying the adaptive leadership framework, we identified the technical and adaptive challenges around the therapeutic interchange process. The team found ways to standardize technical, engage stakeholders for their input, and train pharmacy interns to contact patients and explain the rationale for therapeutic interchange. We implemented the protocol, tracked metrics, and explored ways to make further improvements.

Technical Challenges:	Adaptive Challenges:
P&T committee must first approve the therapeutic interchange of Descovy + Prezcoibix → Symtuza to add to the standing protocol	Patient has been out-of-care with no reliable transportation to return to the clinic
The new regimen must be updated and approved by the state ADAP program	Patient did not feel trust in the pharmacist and/or provider and felt this medication switch was being pushed by the manufacturer
Insurance requires a prior authorization for Symtuza	Patient experienced side effects when beginning with Descovy + Prezcoibix and feels weary to make a switch now
A procedure must be written out to standardize the steps of the project	The entire team must be educated on the procedure and feel empowered to take appropriate steps to complete the therapeutic interchange as appropriate

- Designed to optimize patient care, therapeutic interchange involves addressing technical and adaptive challenges.
- As the most accessible healthcare professional, pharmacists in any role can expand their leadership skills while positively impacting patient care.



Results:

The team worked with the P&T committee to approve the therapeutic interchange of Descovy + Prezcoibix to Symtuza. The team developed a standardized protocol for identifying eligible cases, outlined roles and responsibilities, and implemented the new process. Pharmacy interns were tasked with contacting patients, explaining the benefits of switching, and obtaining patient consent. Interns also learned about ways to establish trust and communicate effectively with patients.

89 patients were on the combination regimen and 31 agreed to switch. Among those who did not switch, the following reasons were identified:

- 21 were out of care
- 17 did not have insurance coverage for the new medication
- 9 declined to switch
- 8 were unreachable
- 3 had an outside prescriber

Further analysis revealed that patients require a better understanding of treatment-related side effects, need access to reliable transportation, and need to trust their providers. These results provided additional insights on ways to further improve the process.

Conclusion:

Pharmacist-led interventions can simplify medication regimens for patients and help them adhere to their regimen. This project represents how pharmacists can expand their leadership skills while positively impacting patient care.