



IMPROVING PATIENT ACCESS TO MEDICATION



Available services can enhance the safety of visually impaired individuals.

BY RICHARD A. LEHRER, MD

As a practicing ophthalmologist and Lions Club volunteer, I recently became aware of services available at no cost to visually impaired patients that may allow them to use prescribed medications more safely and easily. These services are available through the voluntary participation of pharmacies, thanks to the efforts of the US Access Board, an agency of the federal government devoted to promoting accessibility for people with disabilities.

In 2013, a working group convened by the US Access Board promulgated recommendations under the following lengthy title: *Best Practices for Making Prescription Drug Container Label Information Accessible to Persons Who Are Blind or Visually-Impaired or Who Are Elderly*.¹ The idea behind these best practices is to promote patient access to the information on prescription drug container labels by making it available in multiple formats, including “talking” radio-frequency identification or RFID tags, braille labels, and large print labels (Figure).

After becoming aware of the program, I requested and received a talking label reader from En-Vision America, a company that provides products aimed at solving problems for individuals whose vision is impaired. Staff members at my offices demonstrate how the reader works to patients who might benefit from its use. The company’s website (envisionamerica.com/ourpharmacies) helps my staff identify which pharmacies participate in the program.

En-Vision America provides the demo talking label reader to physicians at no cost, and it comes with a sample medication bottle and brochures for patients. Other companies offer similar devices through pharmacies and pharmacy chains.

Patients of mine who have received a talking label reader have found the technology beneficial and have been extremely grateful. The key is for eye care providers to become aware of the services available and to share this information with appropriate patients so that they can



Photo courtesy of En-Vision America

Figure. ScriptTalk talking prescription labels (pictured), ScriptView large print labels, and braille labels are part of the ScriptAbility Accessible Labeling System from En-Vision America. These accessible labels are available from participating pharmacies on request at no cost to patients.

talk to participating pharmacists. All patients need to do is request more accessible auxiliary labels in whatever format they prefer and, if they want one, a talking label reader. No prescription or specific diagnosis is required to qualify for these services. Anyone who has difficulty reading printed prescription labels may request more accessible auxiliary labels. Participating pharmacists can affix RFID tags, braille labels, and large print labels to any prescribed medication, not just a bottle of eye drops. ■

1. Working group recommendations. United States Access Board website. <http://go.usa.gov/cw3ZA>. Published July 10, 2013. Accessed October 4, 2018.

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- Financial disclosure: None