

Standard Definitions of Adherence for Infrequent yet Repeated Health Behaviors

Jennifer M. Gierisch, PhD, MPH; Paul L. Reiter, PhD; Barbara K. Rimer, DrPH; Noel T. Brewer, PhD

Objective: To present common language for defining adherence of infrequent yet repeated health behaviors. **Methods:** We illustrate methodological and conceptual issues using human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination and screening mammography study data as examples. **Results:** Adherence rates of infrequent, repeated behaviors varied widely depending on how adherence was defined and measured. We advocate use of 3 standard definitions of adherence: initiation of behavior (*initiation*), ad-

herence to most recent opportunity (*on-schedule*), and timely adherence across multiple opportunities (*maintenance or completion*). **Conclusions:** The proposed framework has cross-cutting implications for research and practice. Standardizing adherence metrics may facilitate comparisons across studies of health behaviors practiced at infrequent yet repeated intervals.

Key words: adherence, diffusion, maintenance, mammography, HPV vaccination

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