

Detroit Free Press

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Giving back

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TODAY'S SUBJECT:

HIV/AIDS Innovation and Education by the DirectRx family of pharmacists.

THE CAUSE:

As a proponent of HIV/AIDS education and the newest board member of Steppin' Out, Dr. Amanda Zawaideh strives to get one key point across to the community: Drug adherence is crucial to the effectiveness of HIV/AIDS medication. Adherence means that taking the proper medication combinations at the right time, each time, can prolong a patient's life.

BACKGROUND:

After counseling HIV/AIDS patients for years and working with them to develop drug regimens that would make drug adherence easier for their schedules and needs, Zawaideh realized that many patients repeatedly faced the same issue: the large amount of pills or customized drug cocktail that was required on a regular basis throughout the day was not very portable or discreet.

This was particularly true for men, who often have only pockets to accommodate the many pill bottles. Zawaideh decided to use an existing medication packaging technology designed for seniors and

customize HIV regimens for her patients.

The EasyPak Rx was launched. The solution, which is free to DirectRx patients, is a series of long, perforated plastic packets in a "tear-strip" format. Each packet is customized to the patient's regimen and scheduling needs, and all of the critical information is printed on the outside of the packet. The packet fits easily into a back pocket, increasing adherence for patients.

RESULTS:

The Zawaideh family works to raise awareness and money for the local HIV/AIDS community. Recently, the family hosted a new AIDS Walk fund-raising premiere, "Step Inside the Box," at the Royal Oak ZMC Pharmacy location, raising more than \$6,000 for the Steppin' Out organization. The Zawaideh family was also proud to cut the ribbon and kick off this year's AIDS Walk Detroit.

Amanda Zawaideh regularly organizes and hosts monthly support group meetings for HIV/AIDS patients. Through her efforts and those of her family in the community, HIV education and drug adherence is increasing.



ON GIVING: "It's important to me to provide a place where HIV/AIDS patients can come to ask questions and discuss shared issues with a trusted professional. My group members count on me to be their link to the medical community; they know they can call me at work to get answers, whether it's an insurance issue or a drug concern."

INFORMATION:

For more information or to talk with a pharmacist about customizing a drug treatment regimen using the EasyPak Rx, call DirectRx pharmacy at 800-422-3227 or visit www.directrx.com.