Hadley

ScripTalk: Text to Speech for Medication Labels

Presented by Ricky Enger

Ricky Enger: Welcome to Hadley Presents. I'm your host, Ricky Enger, inviting you to sit back, relax, and enjoy a conversation with the experts. In this episode, we discuss safely managing medication with options from En-Vision America. And joining us are Monica Buboltz, rehabilitation teacher for blind and visually impaired and director of marketing for En-Vision America, Jenna Reed. Welcome to the show, both of you.

Monica Buboltz: Good morning, everyone.

Ricky Enger: It is so good to have you both, and we're talking about a subject that is actually a favorite among our audience, partly because it's an incredibly important topic. That is, how do we manage medication safely and effectively, and most importantly, accessibly. So, just being able to do that independently in a way that works for you. It's something that people often ask about, and so just being able to present those options to people is going to be a great time and very informative with both of you.

So again, so happy to have you. Before we get started, why don't we just take a minute to let you both introduce yourselves and talk a little bit about who you are and what you do. Monica let's start with you.

Monica Buboltz: Yes, good morning everyone. My name is Monica Buboltz and I live in Minnesota, and right now it's a beautiful wintertime here. I have worked in the medical field for over forty some years, retired from there, but I continued my own business, which is rehabilitation teacher for people with vision and blindness. And I'm very passionate about it because I've lived with blindness my whole life.

I do have some remaining vision, but I do relate to the folks that I work with very well because I get it and it's a struggle every day, but there's always something worse out there. So, there's nothing in life you can't do, as my braille teacher said, except maybe drive a car. And I was able to do that for a short time. So that's my story and I'm sticking to it, and what we're talking about today is very important subject to me. So, thank you for having me.

Ricky Enger: Fantastic, Monica. Thank you. And Jenna, you are in a slightly warmer climate than Monica, I think. Tell us a bit about who you are and what you do with En-Vision America.

Jenna Reed: Hi Ricky. Thank you so much for having me and Monica on today.

I am with En-Vision America. I'm a director of marketing. We are in Palmetto, Florida, so the West Coast or the Gulf Coast of Florida.

Ricky Enger:

So, let's jump into, I guess letting people know what is available for medication management. I think it's difficult when you are not able to check out what's on the printed label, and maybe you've never been able to do that, or maybe you have vision loss. And so, you used to be able to just pick up the bottle and see what's on it, but now you can't. I think that there really isn't a one size fits all approach because some people don't like technology, some people don't know braille. Some people still can see things in large print. So, I guess I'm wondering what are the options that are available from En-Vision America, Jenna?

Jenna Reed: Sure. We have a lot of options available. We want to cover the gamut. Basically, at our core, we want to make the information on medication labels, visual and in the large print if needed or audible. We also work in dual language labels.

And then for people who are taking the controlled substance safety labels, we have an offering for that as well. So, our most popular offering or our flagship which a lot of people know about is our talking prescription labels. Those are ScripTalk. They're very easy to use. They're free at thousands of pharmacies throughout the US. Real quick, basically the pharmacist puts a small circular tag, usually on the bottom of your prescription bottle. And then you can either use a little device, I liken it to an old school portable CD player, you set it down and you just push a simple button, it reads it out loud. Or you can use your cell phone to go ahead and have that read out loud audibly.

And again, there's no charge for this. If you need the device, we ship it free. You keep it as long as you need it. We just ask you return it to us whenever you're done with it. Another option that we offer for people who do have some usable vision is large print labels. Those are in a booklet style, so they're securely attached to that prescription bottle. Just like ScripTalk, it has your doctor's name, your dosage, your instructions, your warnings, your refill, and all that good stuff. And then for those individuals who maybe English isn't their first language, we offer dual language labels, which again is a booklet style that's attached. It has both English and then one of twenty-five different languages we can translate into. And then of course we do braille. It is a contracted braille, so it's more of a cheat sheet as to what's in that medication.

A lot of people will get ScripTalk in conjunction with that because they want to hear all that information out loud then, which the braille is only again, a cheat sheet. And then for those who are on the stronger medications, we have the controlled substance safety labels, which again follows our format. It's a booklet style that's attached to that bottle. And then the cool thing about that one is it has a QR code on it that you can scan. It just drives home some of those risks associated with that medication, like taking it at nighttime before bed, taking it with food, those kinds of things. Just to help you be a little bit safer because some of those... There's a lot of risks, more of your opioids and things like that that would be associated with that. So, I think that covers the highlights.

Ricky Enger: Absolutely. And it sounds like there are options really for everyone, whether you're into technology, whether you want to have it read out to you. I love the fact that if you're getting braille, you can also kind of supplement that with, "I want to just have a quick read of what this medication is, and I can do that in braille, but if I want that extra information, it's available in another way." So, Monica, you are low vision yourself, and you also work with people who are blind or have low vision. I'm wondering, what did you do before ScripTalk was available and was there ever a time where either you or maybe somebody that you know, that you work with had a situation where having that information on the label was essential, but you didn't have access to it, so you're kind of in an unsafe situation?

Monica Buboltz: Well, the population that I mostly work with are seniors. Seniors do not always have smartphones. Seniors are not always willing to make changes in their lifestyle. But for me to introduce them to ScripTalk because I was at a convention and that was where I got hands-on to various different type of label readers.

And I chose En-Vision America because to me it was the simplest and probably the most cost-effective way because the others were something that was actually physically attached to a bottle that would probably cost a pharmacy more, and then they would hesitate to move forward with it. Because when I saw this, I thought, yes, this is awesome. This will work for people. And my seniors don't need a smartphone if they don't have one. It's just... It's so easy. But the biggest drawing point for me, for my consumers was it was free.

I love to introduce people to resources that are free. And ScripTalk is a free service, and I think that is the most important thing. And there are clients that I've had that have had their own systems, and clearly, when they show me, it's like, "Oh, this is dangerous.” This is very dangerous depending upon... They depend upon the pill shape and color of the pill. Medication changes rapidly, and you cannot depend upon those kind of resources to get by in life, that this is your right medication for your heart or whatever it may be.

Jenna Reed: That's a good point, Monica. I know when I go to the doctor, a lot of times I'm on one generic and they switch me. My pharmacist switches me to another generic, and it's a different looking pill. It feels different in my hands so it's kind of scary.

Monica Buboltz: No, you cannot depend upon that. I got to say I'm a senior myself. You're kind of stuck in your ways, and this is how it is. No, it is not how it is. Using a device like this, reading the whole thing on your bottle. Then I have the person that will say to me, "Oh, but my husband helps me. Oh, my daughter comes over weekly and fills my thing."

If your husband has to go to the nursing home, you are still in your own home and your daughter is on a cruise, who is going to help you? Your neighbor maybe can't see either or hear or whatever it may be. You have to have plan B set in place. Plan B is this. It's a label reader that's easy to use. Turn it on, put the bottle on top, it's going to tell you everything on that whole bottle. It can't get simpler than that. Or use your smartphone if you have one, but it is just so easy and it's free. That's the two selling points for me.

Ricky Enger: And do people listen to that? When you talk about this, I guess for both of you, I know that some people are really resistant to change. Like you said earlier, Monica, people get set in their ways and they're thinking, "Well, if I just squint really hard, I can still see what's on the bottle. Or if I just get used to the shape of the pill, I will be just fine or what have you." So are there things that you can say to kind of talk them through that resistance for whatever reason they don't want to get this, even if it's free. Are there things that you can say to them that tend to work really well in convincing them, "You know, maybe this isn't going to be so bad?"

Monica Buboltz: I have a lot of tactics, but mostly I just show them. I just show them it and they can see for themselves. They can be hands on, they can feel it, they can hear it. The volume is very good. So, for hearing impaired, which a lot of times goes along with vision impairment, I just show them. "Hey, now isn't this simple?" Because if Johnny is gone for the night, he's working, and you got this prescription delivered to you and you are sick. You're not feeling well, you cannot remember how many you were supposed to take now. Do you want to just take a handful? I don't think so. You want to take as directed, so put it on your little thing here and it'll tell you exactly how many to take right now. And you don't have to depend on anyone.

And it's available. You don't have to use it every day, but it's there. It's available.

Ricky Enger: So, what about the logistics of all of this? What do people need to do to get started? And Jenna, I’ll direct that one to you. People may have their pharmacy that they currently go to, and that pharmacy may not know a single thing about En-Vision America or ScripTalk or any of it. So, what do people do to get the ball rolling?

Jenna Reed: The easiest thing folks can do once they hear about this, and they decide that they want accessible labels is just to directly give us a call at En-Vision America. Our phone number is +1 800-890-1180. We have a wonderful patient care advocate team that works the phones, business hours all week long. We do the work behind the scenes. We find out what your pharmacy is, and we can see if it's available at that pharmacy. If it is not, we will definitely talk to that pharmacy and we will educate them and we will do our best to bring them on board. We can also recommend a pharmacy that's near you.

If for some reason your pharmacy doesn't offer it, there's usually another pharmacy in your community that does. For example, we're in all Walmarts across the retail counter. All you have to do is go in and ask for it. Now, if they don't know, remember, Walmart is a big company and not every retail counter has it until somebody's asked for it, so they don't realize that they can offer it to you. Again, call us. We know the corporate side, we talk behind the scenes to them, and we'll help get you set up. Most of the big mail orders do it. I know Express Scripts does, Optum Rx, Kaiser Permanente. A lot of the grocery stores, Hy-Vee, Meijer, Publix, if you're in the south and Florida, Rite Aid, Sam's Club, CVS has a spoken RX version, which I know you have talked about as well. Wegmans. It's also in all the veteran affairs throughout the country as well. So that one is available too.

Basically, what happens is we get you set up at your pharmacy and then they'll get your information, and they'll flag you as a ScripTalk user. And then they send us a simple form if you want the device. We don't have access to any of your prescriptions or your medical information, but we're going to follow up with you. We will get your information and then we'll ship out this free device for you that you can have as long as you need it. And then we just follow up with you periodically. I think it's once every six months. And then once you're set up, we'll also follow up with you just to make sure everything's going smoothly so if there's any issues, we always want to hear about it. We're here to make this as simple as possible. And the other thing I can note too is if you are tech-savvy, you can go to our website, En-VisionAmerica.com, scroll to the very bottom of that homepage, and there's a pharmacy lookup.

It'll automatically know your zip code, and it can pull up within a 10, 15, 25-mile radius, and it'll show you all the pharmacies around you that do offer it.

Ricky Enger: That's excellent. I think the best part of that is that it sounds like if there are roadblocks, sometimes pharmacies don't know things or they're overworked and understaffed and it can be problematic to keep calling and calling and going, "Where's my ScripTalk?" It sounds like all of those things are really handled behind the scenes. So, the patient gets things started, and then after that, it's a conversation between En-Vision America and the pharmacy. And eventually you get your device, or you get your app and right there you have accessible medication. Sometimes it feels interminable going back and forth with pharmacies and bureaucracy and such. So, it's good to see that that is not an issue.

Jenna Reed: We do our best to make it as easy as possible.

Ricky Enger: Absolutely. Is there anything that either of you would say to somebody who's thinking about contacting En-Vision America right now, or they're thinking about doing this, but they're still kind of on the fence?

Monica Buboltz: Yes, I do have a good thought on this one. I always say, don't wait for tomorrow, so you want to be prepared. You want to be prepared in case your eyes are not intact that day. Your environment makes a huge difference of how you see from day to day. Be prepared, have this as your plan B, because you don't want to wait till tomorrow and tomorrow you can't read it.

Ricky Enger: Certainly. Thanks so much for that, Monica. Jenna, any final thoughts from you that you'd leave the listeners with before we go?

Jenna Reed: So, anything that we can do to help, even if you just have questions and you're on the fence, please just give us a call and we'll talk you through the options. And if you're not ready, you're not ready.

We're not going to make you do anything you don't want to want to do, but we do want to talk to you about what's available and what we can do to help you just be a little bit more safe and independent at home.

Monica Buboltz: And it actually is a win-win situation. So, if there's ever any hesitation, it's out there, it's available, take advantage of it. There's not a lot of things free in the world, and this is one of them.

Ricky Enger: Well, thank you both so much for stopping by and sharing this information with us and just sharing your passion for making sure that people have what they need to be as independent as they can be. We will have information in the show notes about how to get in touch with En-Vision America. So, check that out. And thank you both again for stopping by and thank you all so much for listening.

Monica Buboltz: Thank you for having us.

Jenna Reed: Thank you. We appreciate you and your audience.

Ricky Enger: Got something to say? Share your thoughts about this episode of Hadley Presents or make suggestions for future episodes. We'd love to hear from you. Send us an email at podcast@hadley.edu. That's P-O-D-C-A-S-T@hadley.edu. Or leave us a message at 847-784-2870. Thanks for listening.