

Budgeting to breathe: Strategies families use to manage asthma care costs

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Background

- Asthma remains a substantial public health problem in the U.S.
 - Affects 8% of adults and 9% of children
 - Racial and ethnic disparities exist
- Asthma care is expensive
 - Average costs per year: \$3,000 per person
 - Often requires out-of-pocket spending for families with high deductible health plans

Study aims

1. Identify strategies that U.S. families use to manage the cost of asthma care
2. Explore the implications of cost management strategies for adherence to asthma medications



Methods

Study population

- Commercially-insured U.S. adults who had asthma and/or were the parent of child with asthma
- Recruited from Harvard Pilgrim Health Care and the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
- Purposive sampling to include those with lower incomes, minority race/ethnicity, and persistent asthma

Data collection and analysis

- Semi-structured phone interviews conducted in 2018
- Analyzed using thematic content analysis

Study Population (n=59)

| | % |
|--|----|
| Female | 85 |
| Race/ethnicity | |
| Non-Hispanic White | 75 |
| Non-Hispanic Black | 10 |
| Hispanic | 10 |
| Other | 5 |
| Low household income (< \$50,000 annually) | 19 |
| High deductible insurance plan | 75 |
| Persistent asthma | 64 |
| Asthma role | |
| Person with asthma | 46 |
| Parent of child with asthma | 29 |
| Both | 25 |

Cost management strategies



Prevention



Shopping



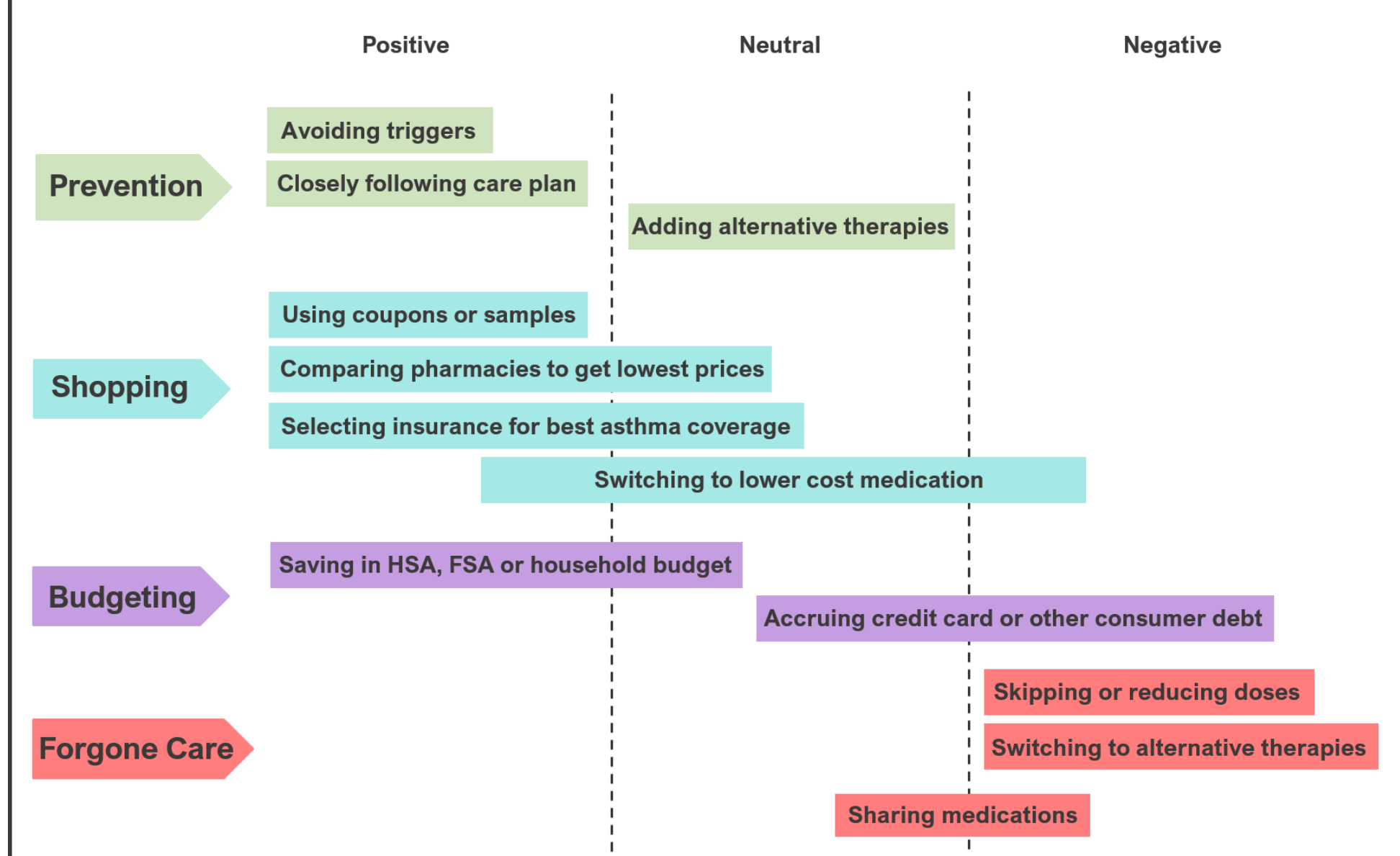
Budgeting



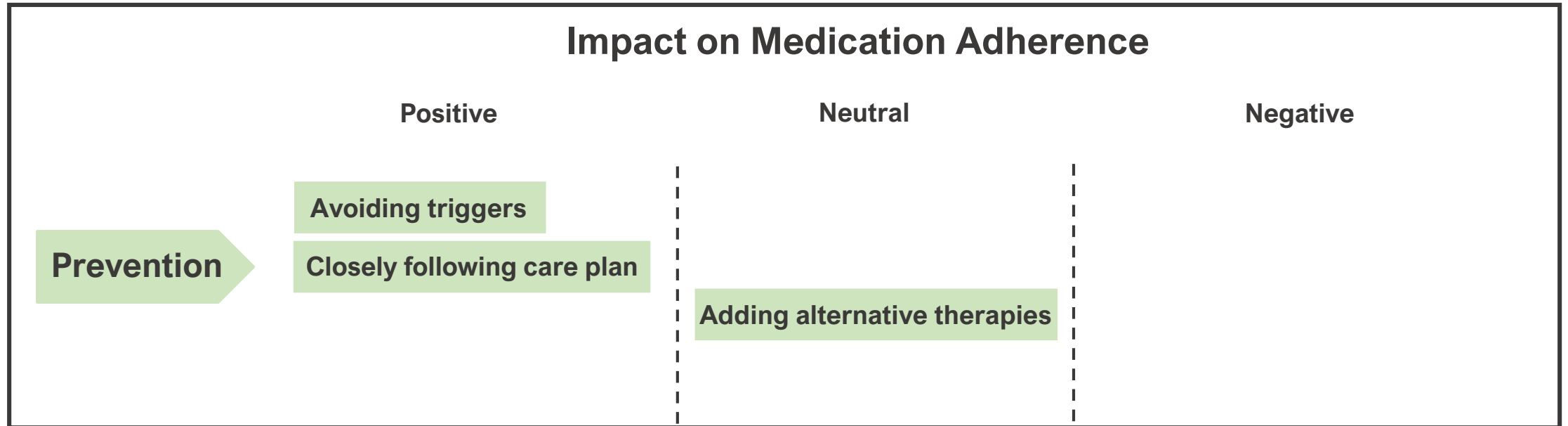
Forgone care

Cost Management Strategies

Impact on Medication Adherence



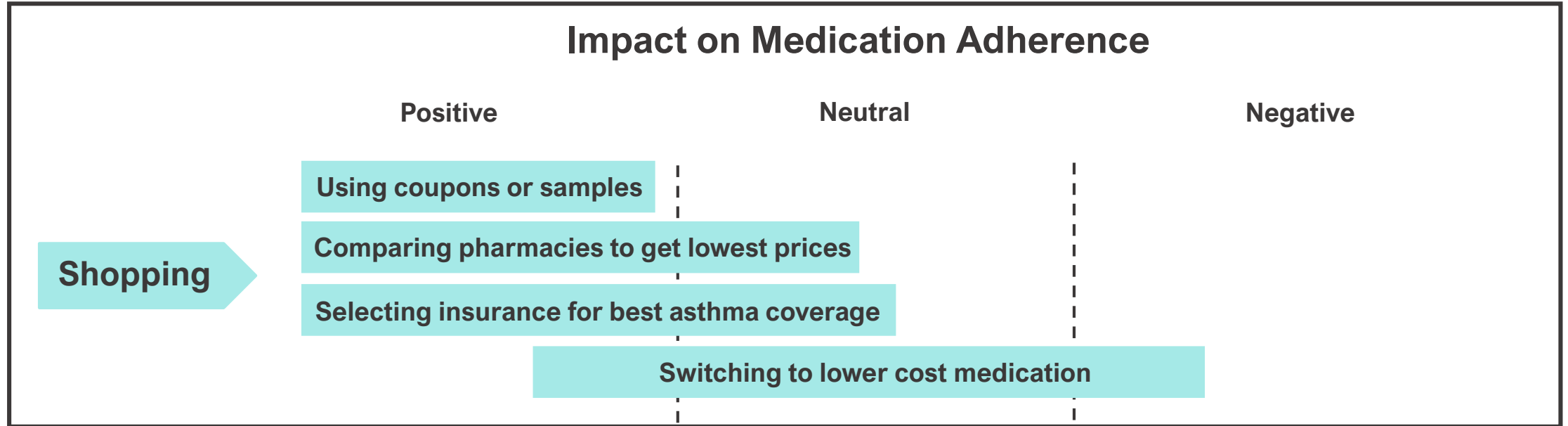
Cost Management Strategies: Prevention



Prevention

“[We have learned to lower costs by] making sure that my son is sticking to his asthma care plan. And making sure, if he comes down with a cold, we immediately start his asthma protocols that the allergist has in place for when he's sick. Utilizing the allergist office instead of emergency rooms and sticking with his six-month checkups, just so we don't have any surprises.”

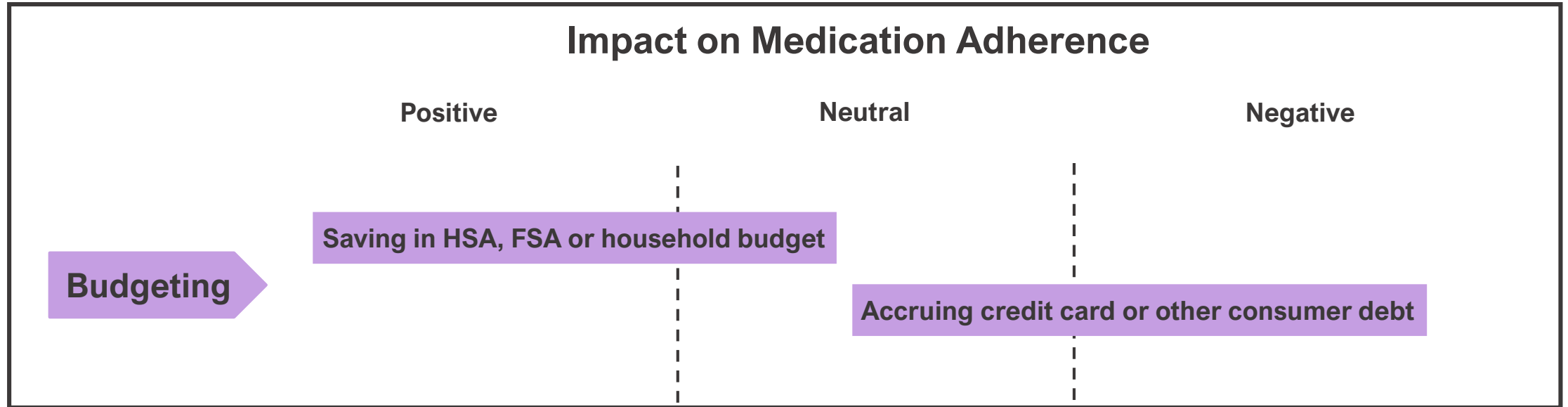
Cost Management Strategies: Shopping



Shopping

“Finding things like the coupons on the medicine have been a really big help. Because at one point my asthma was kind of flaring up, and my doctor prescribed an inhaler that was, like, \$350. And I was like, ‘Oh my gosh, this is kind of crazy to just do this to see if it works.’ But in general I'm a big fan of breathing, so I just do whatever it takes.”

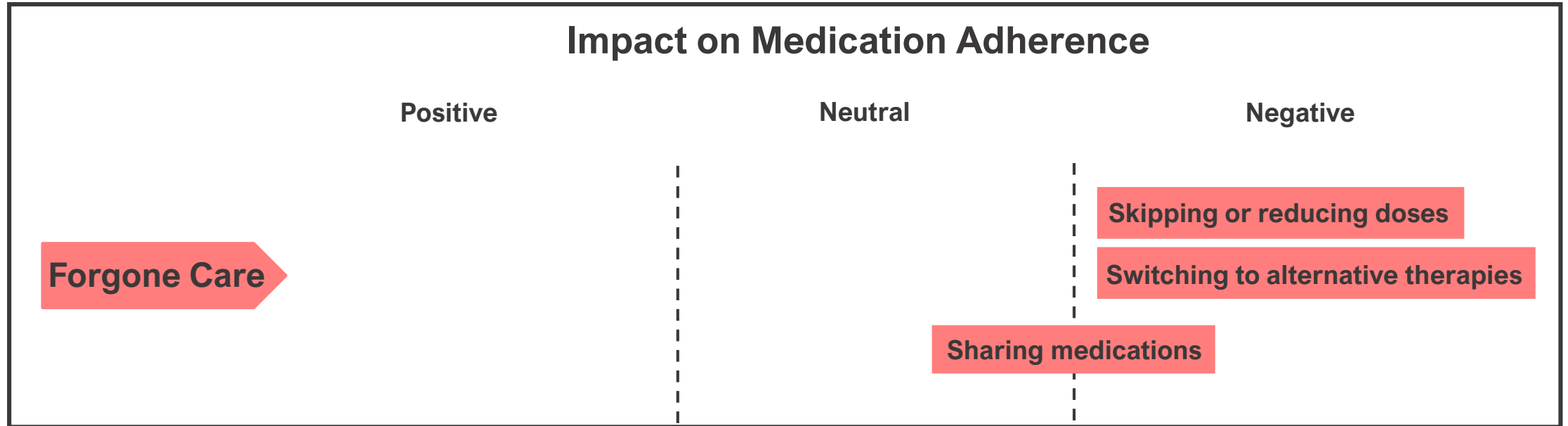
Cost Management Strategies: Budgeting



Budgeting

“We prioritize [healthcare] so much in our budget. Things like [my son’s] epinephrine and his daily medication and his rescue inhaler, those are things that his life sort of depends on. So we don't cut from that. But we've cut some other things. We cut cable, we downsized, all that kind of stuff just so that it's easier to afford.”

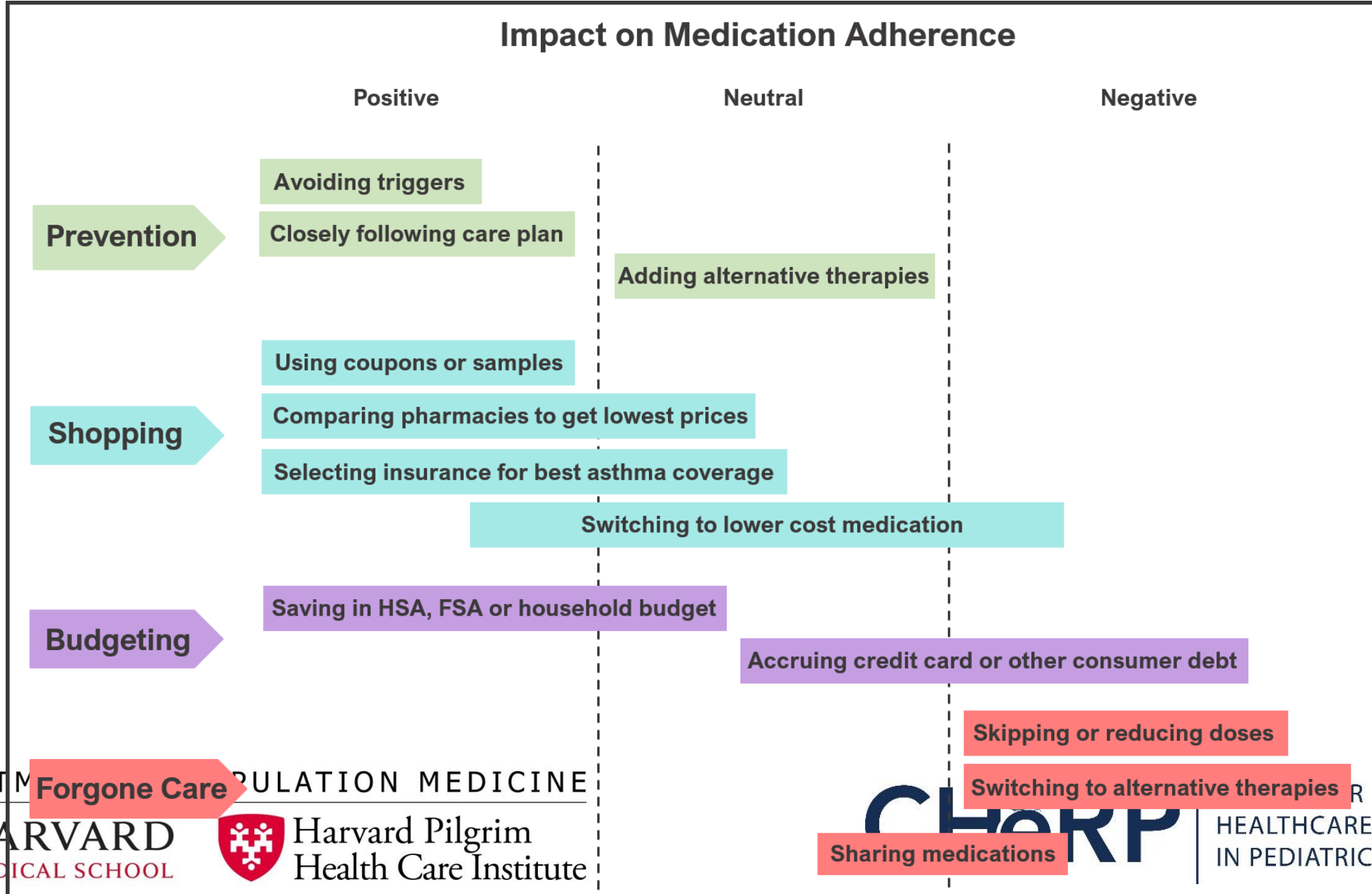
Cost Management Strategies: Forgone Care



Forgone care

“So I'm supposed to take [my asthma medication] twice a day, but I don't because it's so damn expensive that I only take it once a day.... I've recently started doing a lot of work with essential oils to see if I can get it under control so that I'm not getting sick.”

Cost Management Strategies



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Discussion

- U.S. families affected by asthma are highly engaged as consumers of care
- Cost management strategies can have positive and negative impacts on adherence
- Interventions are needed to help families manage asthma costs, achieve continuity of care, and maintain adherence to preventive medications

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Questions?

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