

CASE STUDIES:

Automating Your Outpatient Pharmacy

REASONS TO AUTOMATE YOUR OUTPATIENT PHARMACY OPERATIONS ABOUND. FOR some facilities, workflow efficiency is of the utmost concern, whereas others are solely interested in increasing patient safety or improving the services provided to patients. However, for most outpatient pharmacies, all three of these goals need to be reached.

With many sophisticated vendor systems available in the market, how do you know which is right for you? Furthermore, how can you ensure that the implementation will be smooth and that products will perform at their optimal levels?

On the pages that follow, outpatient pharmacists share their experiences with implementing automated technology and optimizing the use of various vendor products. **FR&P**



CASE STUDIES:

Automated Safety Nets

University of North Carolina (UNC) Healthcare operates three outpatient pharmacies, each dispensing from 800 to 1100 prescriptions a day. When making the move towards automation, we knew our limited space could not accommodate a system with a big footprint. We also wanted a fairly simple, easy-to-maintain system that would allow us to capture patient signatures electronically, better manage our will-call bins, and display drug images to staff members during the filling and verification processes. With these requisites in mind, in 2003, we decided to implement Innovation Associates' PharmASSIST Enterprise System.

Using this technology, a pharmacist receives a prescription from a patient at the intake window, reviews it, and then enters it with our TechRx order-entry software, which interfaces with PharmASSIST and prints a bar-coded label. A technician scans the label, and if the order is for one of the 100 commonly dispensed medications stored in our PharmASSIST cabinets, the system will auto-fill the prescription. If a prescription requires manual filling, the technician scans its bar code and the bar code on the stock bottle to verify that the drug matches the prescription. Providing further safety checks, PharmASSIST displays an on-screen image of the drug, along with patient information, and the order is then verified by a pharmacist. Filled prescriptions are placed in our PharmASSIST-managed will-call bins and added to our patient-delivery queue, which help us track prescriptions and service customers with greater ease. Upon delivery of the prescription, the software presents an electronic signature pad for the patient to sign.



PharmASSIST cabinets in UNC Healthcare's outpatient pharmacies store and dispense 100 common medications.

By Colleen Gresham, RPh, and Randy Bowling, RPh

Using PharmASSIST's reports, we track controlled-substance prescriptions and employee fill and verification activities to meet JCAHO medication-management standards. In addition, the elec-

tronic signature capture confirms for drug manufacturers that patients who qualify for drug-assistance programs have received their drugs and that replacement drugs are needed. PharmASSIST's reports also help us track inventory and expiration dates.

Post-purchase, we have been very satisfied with Innovation Associates' training and customer-service programs. In fact, their praiseworthy service is one reason we plan to use PharmASSIST in the next pharmacy we build.

Randy Bowling, RPh, assumed his current post as senior operations specialist at UNC Healthcare in 2001.

The assistant director of pharmacy for ambulatory care service at UNC Healthcare, Colleen Gresham, RPh, has worked for UNC Healthcare since 1982.

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