

The Changing Roles of the Pharmacist and the Pharmacy

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As the world around us evolves staff and spatial considerations are changing in just about every sector and industry. One of the most significant changes evolving quickly is how the consumer uses the Pharmacist and the Pharmacy.

The Pharmacist

New expectations of the Pharmacist are requiring more staff, significant operational changes, and a reallocation of the space within the pharmacy.

As the Pharmacist evolves into more of a clinical role, they also become a free source of information, required in several states by law. They routinely help the consumer with cholesterol, diabetes, and disease states. In a few states, the Pharmacist can also prescribe formulary medications. This is a significant change from the recent past where the Pharmacists primary focus was to manage a pharmacy that filled and distributed prescriptions.

Total Patient and Consumer Care

The Pharmacist has become the translator for the use, effects and action of medications and the care of the consumer. They monitor and assess how well the prescribed medications are working and can recommend alternative treatments to the team caring for the patient/consumer.

Vaccinators

To help with COVID 19 vaccine distribution nationwide, several pharmacies and Pharmacists have become the vaccinators responsible for administering the vaccine, counseling and follow up. This adds to the current role many provide to administer and promote immunizations for flu and other vaccinations.

Opioid Stewardship

Pharmacists are in the process of setting the standard for the safe use of Opioids. Through their stewardship, with a central role in patient and consumer healthcare teams, the Pharmacist is in the best position to provide counseling on reducing risk of overdose, through oversight of dosing and medication abuse. They also have a wealth of knowledge on alternatives to pain management.

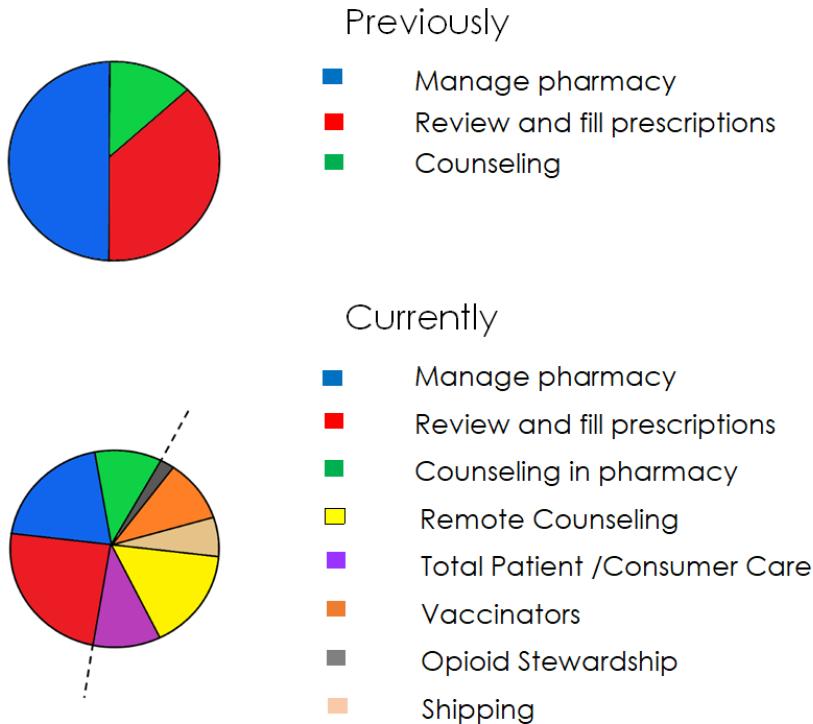
Shipping

The percentage of medications that are being shipped has risen substantially and is typically at least 30% of the pharmacy distribution in some cases 50%. This is a new role for staff and requires a dedicated staging area to process the packing and shipping. Some pharmacies are seeing an increase in drive-thru, less so in shipping.

Remote Counseling

Providing the patient/consumer access to the pharmacist for counseling, information, and disease care has become a necessity with an aging population and COVID restrictions. The ability for the pharmacist to show a patient how to take their diabetes shot will instill confidence in the patient and provide a better experience.

Changing Roles of the Pharmacist by percentage of time spent within a typical week



The Pharmacy

Operational considerations in the new retail pharmacy environment require a redistribution of staff, potentially more staff with higher qualifications and specific expertise. With more staff, roles and space allocation becomes more critical. The allocation of space in the pharmacy has not caught up with the changing roles of the pharmacist and redistribution of staff expertise.

Space Allocation

Along with current requirements for storage, filling and assembly, processing and will call the following additional criteria will assist with pharmacy efficiency as expectations continue to change and increase:

1. A private room for counseling and administering vaccinations.
2. A private room for patient/consumer to wait to be sure there are no adverse effects of the vaccination.
3. To have the most efficient flow within the pharmacy, utilize data driven criteria to determine allocation of space and layout for medications and supplements. Should these decisions be made based on days of supply that can focus on shorter shelf life or other criteria?
 - Determine a regular schedule to reevaluate.
4. Dedicated area (s) to accommodate the following:
 - Packing and shipping area with equipment to print labels
 - A computer for research
 - Charging equipment, scanners, etc. and phones
 - Waste management
5. Flexible queuing to provide options during peak times.
6. Additional space for personal items for increased staff.
7. Depth of pill bay storage to address inventory.

Service Expansion

The space and service allocation review based on changing roles and opportunities within the pharmacy is shown as relative areas noted below. To meet the anticipated future expectations the pharmacy is showing an approximate increase of 20% in the overall size of the pharmacy. These layouts are not based on any specific pharmacy design.

1. Drive thru, Curbside and Walk-up Services

Convenience and reducing wait time are the goals of the drive thru in a pharmacy. In many cases the traffic at the drive-thru has increased 50%, requiring an additional lane, additional staffing, and equipment.

Curbside delivery and Walk-up service windows are solutions that are being explored nationwide and can be critical to help distribution of staffing roles and speed of service.

2. Will call and filling of prescriptions will require additional space and possibly staff with the redistribution of the Pharmacist's role.

