

Technology Transforms a Snyder's Pharmacy

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FARIBAULT, Minn. - Snyder's Drug Stores pharmacist Deb Davis doesn't like to think about how she and her small staff here filled more than 2,000 prescriptions a week before automation.

But she is more than happy to talk about how her professional life has changed since the Snyder's store-one of five pharmacies serving this southeastern Minnesota city of 18,000 people - installed a ScriptPro SP 200 robotic dispensing unit in September.

"You name it, it's done it," notes Davis, who is the only full-time pharmacist working at the store. "Because the technicians can now do most of the work in getting the prescriptions ready, I have much more time to talk with patients and physicians."

Available since 1997, ScriptPro's SP 200 automates the repetitive, manual dispensing tasks that are most subject to human error, virtually eliminating the chances of a foul-up.

ScriptPro executives say that nearly 90% of the dispensing errors that lead to legal actions against pharmacies can be eliminated with the system.

That, Davis notes, is just as important to her as the added efficiency she gets from having a robotic system in her store.

"I will never work in a pharmacy without one again," she remarks. "It's not just because of the volume we do but because of the error factor. This machine will not let you make an error."

The robotic dispensing system, explains Davis, performs nearly the entire prescription filling process without a human hand ever touching the drugs. Technicians key in [prescriptions, the machine fills and labels the bottles, and the only time the pharmacist sees the medication is when he or she does a final check to ensure the right medicine has been dispensed and the label matches the prescribing physician's directions.

Because the system has expedited the prescription filling process so greatly in Davis' pharmacy, it has addressed the greatest need facing every drug store - professional staffing.

"Because of this machine, we are looking to hire more technical staff," Davis says. "And that will be a lot easier than finding another pharmacist."