Aurora Pharmacy reduces filling costs and enhances patient experience

Robotic arm automatically counts and fills prescriptions.

Aurora relies on the SP 200 Robotic Prescription Dispensing System to reduce staffing costs.

Reduce Dispensing Costs

Wisconsin-based Aurora Pharmacy, a division of Aurora Health Care, is committed to health management beyond dispensing medications. Allowing pharmacists more one-on-one time with customers, increasing safety, and reducing filling costs were its priorities in choosing the right automated dispensing solution.

Aurora Pharmacy chose the compact SP 100 for some locations, and the larger SP 200 for others. Maximizing the number of prescriptions filled robotically was key to cost reduction and increasing personal care to the patient.

"We were looking for a workflow solution that would lower the cost per prescription and reduce the staff hours required to fill prescriptions," according to Kimberly Hodgkinson, Director of Finance.

John Gates, Director of Pharmacy Operations, said that "involvement early on with ScriptPro and with district managers to set guidelines for reaching utilization targets for sites" was critical in achieving the resultant savings in staff hours.

Reporting tools in the ScriptPro systems offer insight into the pharmacy operation and allow objective evaluation of the best use of staff time, which drugs should be added to the system, and peak filling days and times.

"The reporting tools were crucial in the decision to get ScriptPro automation," said Hodgkinson. "The summary report shows us the fill rates, who enters data, and who fills prescriptions and verifies. It also helps us determine which drugs should be in the system to maximize utilization. We have other technology in our pharmacy that has no reporting tools and we can't judge the value of that system

Aurora Pharmacy
Customer Since 2003

Pharmacy Type: Community
Goal: Reduce more than 60 hours of weekly staff time per store.
Location: Wisconsin

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to our business." Hodgkinson continued, "Even the smaller SP 100 is filling around 40-50% of the prescription volume, allowing us to cut down on the cost of our staff. We have reduced more than 60 hours of weekly staff time per store and continue to improve those numbers."

Aurora has been able to increase the robot utilization and decrease the time dedicated to repetitive filling tasks because of its proactive approach to monthly evaluation and analysis.

"Our corporate culture reinforces the concept that our processes should result in better patient outcomes and better profits for the company," said Gates.

Commitment to Patient Health Management

Dale Adamczyk, Managing Pharmacist at an Aurora Pharmacy, noted that beyond the cost-reducing value of the ScriptPro system, "It allows us more patient contact at the store level. We can perform tasks that directly benefit our patients, like calling them to let them know a prescription is ready. The ScriptPro robot has reduced response time to our patients and increased our production, allowing us additional time and opportunity to provide customer service."

"The SP 100 and SP 200 help get prescriptions filled faster for our customers," added Hodgkinson. "Employees are more engaged in the process and patients receive better service. In both cases, it makes the experience better for our customers."

Adamczyk said that regardless of staffing on a given day, the SP 100 fills 40-50% of the prescriptions and the SP 200 fills 50-60%. "The robot gives us a comfort level that we will always be able to provide customer service, even during busy times or short staffing, and in those situations that require quick service, such as when a patient is in pain or in a hurry."

Gates agreed that technology allows pharmacies to interact with patients to improve patient outcomes. "We anticipated staff burnout if the pace had continued without help from technology. With our ScriptPro robots we're making an investment for the future of the pharmacy."

Additional Benefits to Aurora

In the course of implementing ScriptPro robotics into their pharmacies, Aurora experienced improvements in patient safety, inventory management, recruiting qualified staff, and the work environment.

"We can buy drugs in larger quantities for additional cost savings and we can fill cells to capacity," according to Adamczyk. "Then, less work is involved in maintaining drugs in the system. We handle drugs less often and have greater purchasing power. On-site calibration of the cells adds convenience to changing drugs in the system and switching generics. There is no lag time."

In addition to built-in safety checks in the system, Adamczyk noted that the prescription label, which is unique to ScriptPro, offers advantages to both the pharmacist and the patient. "The product identification on the label is a huge advantage to us. The drug description saves a lot of time in product identification. Before, I had to have the stock bottle for checking, but now I can look at the label on the prescription vial."

Adamczyk continued, "We show our customers the drug description on the label so if they have any questions—for instance when they change from one generic to another—the customers can check the identification on the label for themselves. We encourage them to call us if there is any question about what's in the bottle."

Gates added, "From a recruiting standpoint, technology is important to pharmacy students. Technology is extremely helpful in freeing up pharmacists to counsel patients and thereby improve patient outcomes. Our pharmacists consider the SP 100 or SP 200 to be an important tool in streamlining the workflow process."

Kimberly Hodgkinson, Director of Finance
John Gates, Director of Pharmacy Operations