

Transform your business in 2012 with the “Pharmacy Triangle”

A SIMPLE BUT POWERFUL DISPENSARY WORKFLOW MODEL.

Investing time in rethinking the workflow in your dispensary, to return the pharmacist to the front of the store, is good business, says Maja Grosspietch of Willach.

2011 brought with it a raft of changes for Australian pharmacies and 2012 is seeing more. With top sellers coming off patent this year, increasing amounts of generics are being squeezed into already cluttered Australian dispensaries. This number is only likely to grow. Contributing to the chaos, rescheduling of products such as codeine-containing medication has further increased the amount of stock and activity in the behind-the-counter area.

While pharmacists are dedicated to patient counselling and professional services, the majority can't physically find the time to meet one-on-one with every customer due to the increasing demands of their job. Undeniably, investing time in rethinking the workflow in your dispensary to support your pharmacists better should be a top priority for this year.

The macro and micro environ-

mental factors which are currently influencing pharmacy are also driving key changes to the dispensary set up. We are all familiar with the traditional dispensing model which is predominantly seen in Australian pharmacies.

Dispensary design

The layout generally sees the pharmacist situated at the back of the dispensary, positioned between shelving and working through a pile of prescriptions, while the dispensing technician is busy walking around the maze of cluttered timber shelves dispensing medication boxes.

In this set up, not only are dispensing errors more likely to occur – which puts both patients as well as the business image at risk – but significant time and money is also lost in inefficiencies resulting from this way of working. In this model, the shop assistant is usually the point of contact for customers,

advising on complementary sales and generics when they are actually less qualified to do so.

Plus, in the chain of “Chinese whispers” between customer, shop assistant and pharmacist, information deemed important by the pharmacist can potentially get lost.

This model is also not conducive to industry developments and current external and internal threats and opportunities. Dispensing fee incentive cutbacks and increases to service incentives under the 5CPA are just two local examples of this. What's more, pharmacists are increasingly required to provide higher levels of care and customer service to sustain their role and business.

Successful businesses have always recognised the value of customer service and building strong professional relationships with their customers. It is much easier (and approximately seven times less costly) to keep

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current customers than to cultivate new ones. Therefore pharmacists should ensure their dispensary set up is conducive to customer interaction.

However, simply positioning the pharmacist at the forefront of the dispensary without a structured framework of support isn't very practical, especially during peak hours.

Many pharmacists are already time-poor, filling hundreds of prescriptions per day. High workload demands are widespread throughout many pharmacies due to the low margins gained by a single prescription fill, and the higher the volume the less time a pharmacist has to process a script. Pharmacists are devoted to spending more time counselling patients and helping in achieving better healthcare, but the increasing administration work puts a lot of constraints on the profession.

Realizing the need for a more organized way of working that will support pharmacists at the front line whilst warranting high levels of operational productivity and safety, a recently developed workflow model brings more structure to the chain of medication supply.

The Pharmacy Triangle

The Pharmacy Triangle work model is designed to be used as a practical tool to aid pharmacists in organising the dispensing structure and workflow around them, so that they are more empowered to take on the

%Diagram 1



growing responsibilities of their job.

The progressive concept has been developed by Maja Grosspietsch, with the support of Australian pharmacists Marta Stybowski and Jay Calder.

How does it work?

The idea is that if the key resources of the dispensing chain (Diagram 1) – the pharmacist, the technician and the prescription medication – are aligned in a work triangle, optimum efficiencies and synergies are achieved.

The pharmacist will be best supported in his transition to work as a holistic health professional at

the point of sale, with the benefit of improved customer relationship management (CRM), customer loyalty and referrals, higher levels of compliance and patient care

The position of the pharmacist will cater for greater income opportunities from products and services that only pharmacists are qualified to provide. The benefits will be increased sales, higher profitability and competitive edge together with

There will be maximum productivity in the chain of medication supply and services, with the benefit of minimum wastage of time and space and lower costs.

The structured flow of infor- ➤

%Diagram 2

- Pharmacist
- Technician
- Rx medication stored in efficient pharmacy equipment (roundshelf)
- Shop assistant
- Customer

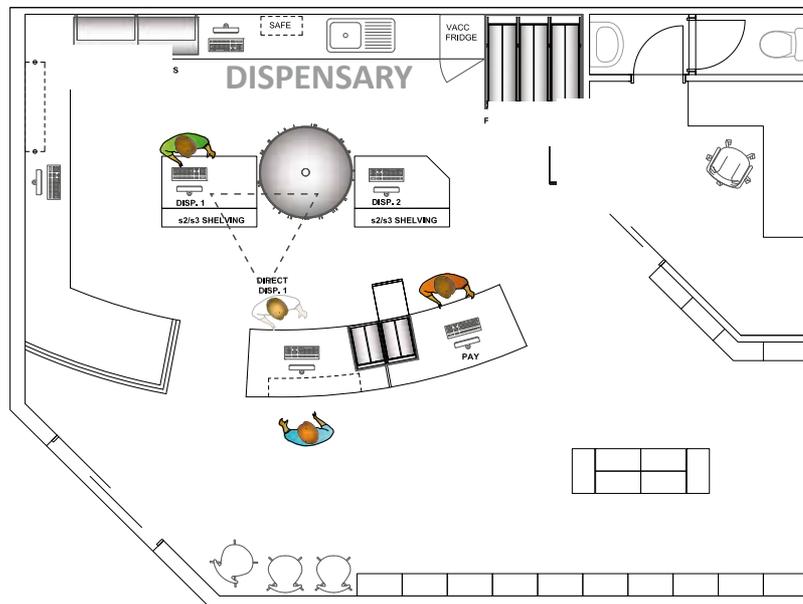
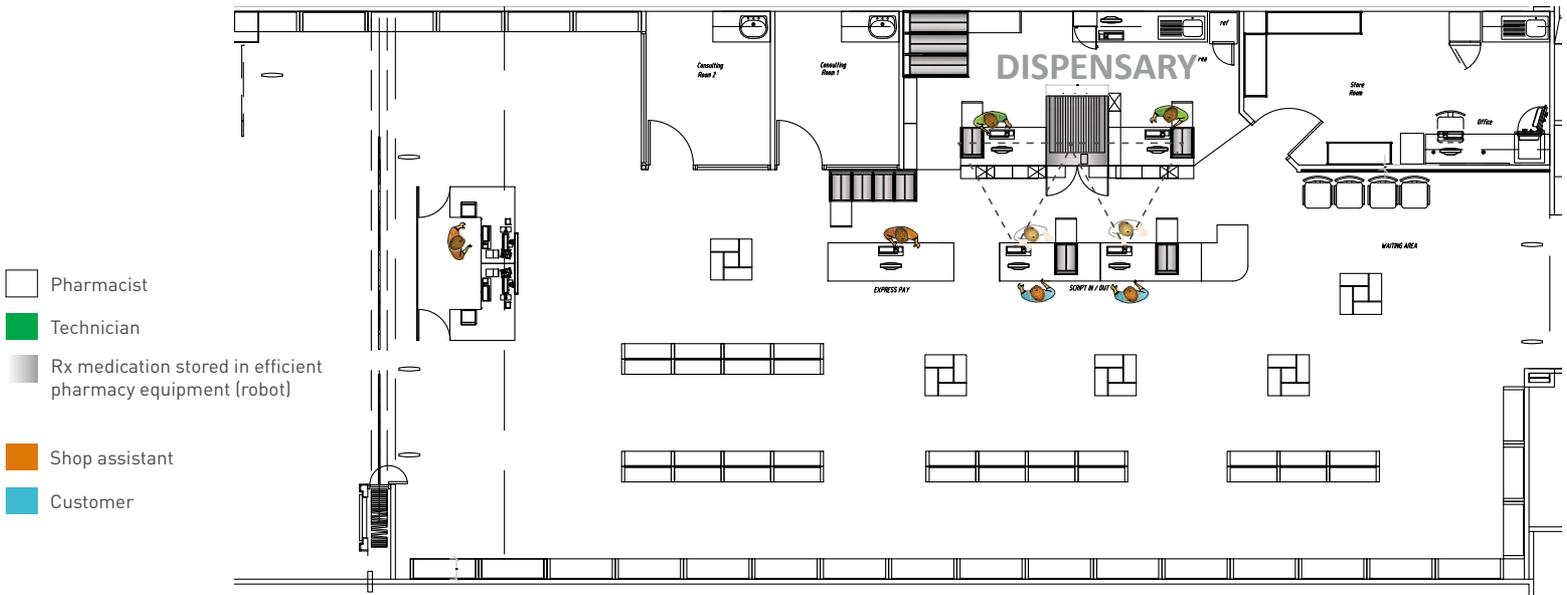


Diagram 3



In a nutshell, the triangle model positions pharmacists at the forefront, where they are of most value to the business and most accessible to the customer.

mation and goods will result in lower levels of staff stress, greater job satisfaction, higher levels of patient safety. This is best practice.

In summary

In a nutshell, the triangle model (Diagram 2):

1. Positions pharmacists at the forefront, where they are of most value to the business and most accessible to the customer, providing a complete health solution while building a profitable continuing relationship with the customer that drives qualified advice, expert sales, compliance and professional services. In this set up, the pharmacist decides if a script is to be directly dispensed or if it should be passed on to the technician.

2. Supports both the pharmacist and dispensing technician by integrating superior medication storage equipment, specifically designed for the flexible demands of pharmacy. This facilitates a space and time efficient, organised and safer dispensing method of Rx (prescription) medication. (For example, sloping shelves, pharmacy drawers, round shelves or robots.)

3. Supports the pharmacist by utilising the dispensing technician as a key resource to streamline the selection, dispensing and labelling of prescription medication (bulk).

Seamless process

The close proximity and direct access of these three key resources, without physical barriers between them, allows the process to occur seamlessly, without any double handling and unnecessary movements.

This design will also best serve the patient at the input and output stage of the process.

The optimal distances between the three points will vary due to differences in dispensary set up, shapes and sizes.

As a guideline however, they should not be positioned too close or too far from one another in order to avoid excessive walking, hinder direct communication, or allow for bottlenecks to form.

Obstructions such as walls, pillars and cabinets, which intersect the triangle's legs, should be removed whenever possible.

It is recommended that shop assistants and other staff work outside the triad workflow. This allows the pharmacist and the technician to work uninterrupted in their functions.

To ensure that goods and information can flow unimpeded, traffic flow through the centre of the triangle should be avoided at all times.

The usage of specialised pharmacy equipment to store medication boxes helps minimise

restocking and dispensing turnaround times. Stock is organised in a compact and organized method reducing the likelihood of selection errors.

The triad model is applicable to every pharmacy setting. In pharmacies with higher prescription volumes that operate with several pharmacists and technicians, multiple triangles can be formed.

In these settings the integration of automatic dispensing technology can help to further speed up medication selection and dispense (Diagram 3).

Impact

In summary, investing time into the design of your dispensary and applying the fundamentals of a practical workflow model to streamline daily dispensing operations can have a significant impact on your business, transforming your pharmacy into a more productive and more profitable health destination, driving customer service, experience and loyalty.

On a larger scale, this transformation will increase the quality of patient care that is provided by Australian pharmacists to their communities.

Maja Grosspietsch is a marketing manager at Willach, the market leader in professional storage and dispensing equipment for medicines.

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