Dear Independent Pharmacy,

Despite changing industry conditions and evolving legislation that impact the way you do business, independent pharmacies continue to exhibit an unwavering passion for serving the community and offering personalized patient care.

Independently Healthy is a celebration of these forward-thinking pharmacies, highlighting the various ways in which independent pharmacies maintain success and good health in their communities and businesses.

Independently Healthy pharmacies are among the best resources for meeting ever-changing patient needs because they are available, flexible and can adapt to new conditions quickly with solutions that make sense. Independent pharmacies are cornerstones of their communities.

We publish this magazine with the goal of sharing best practices, offering education on the latest industry trends and fostering a sense of community among you and your peers. You’ll find many great stories inside that will inspire you to think innovatively so that you can grow your business, optimize resources, make more time for patients and expand your reach in the community you serve.

I hope you enjoy this edition of Independently Healthy.

Thank you for reading,
Steve Lawrence
Senior Vice President, Independent Sales
Independently Healthy pharmacies stand out from the competition and are a valued part of their communities because they excel in four key areas:

**Efficiency**
Independently Healthy pharmacies optimize resources to make more time for patients.
3 - Meeting of the minds: engineering students offer fresh perspective
4 - Resources to effectively drive business
6 - Inventory needs? Simple solution increases efficiency, cash flow
8 - Spend more time with patients, not inventory
9 - The power of an engaged staff

**Experience**
Independently Healthy pharmacies improve the customer experience through market understanding.
11 - Going the extra mile: Pharmacist doesn’t allow snow to stop her in her tracks
12 - A unique service for unique needs: University health program opens mobile clinic to reach rural areas
14 - Who are your customers?

**Engagement**
Independently Healthy pharmacies engage government and community to build business opportunities.
17 - Pharmacist moms unite
18 - Engaging with legislation to make an impact
19 - Hope in the midst of devastation

**Evolution**
Independently Healthy pharmacies evolve their business to support community needs.
21 - Building your best immunization program
22 - How pharmacists are evolving their business to meet community needs
Efficiency

As the role of the pharmacist continues to expand and evolve, it becomes more critical than ever to find ways to operate even more efficiently. Faced with dwindling resources and rapid-fire industry changes, pharmacists must prioritize carefully to maximize time spent with patients. In this section, we’ll explore how gaining efficiencies can simplify business operations to help drive your business and ultimately, free up valuable time for patient care.

“I am always looking for ways to spend more time with my patients.”
When Teresa Casmus, R.Ph., saw an opportunity to help more of her patients with their adherence needs, she decided to seek advice from what some may consider an unconventional source.

The pharmacist and manager of the Salisbury, North Carolina, location of The Medicine Shoppe reached out to a group of engineering students at North Carolina State University to help her improve her compliance packaging process and the storage system she had in place.

In the end, her goal was to increase efficiencies within the pharmacy so that she could expand her services and offer more patients in her area with much-needed compliance packaging.

According to the National Institutes of Health, medication non-adherence leads to approximately 125,000 preventable deaths each year.

Especially for the aging population, remembering to take medications on time and keeping track of multiple medications can be problematic. Casmus was already using Dispill® multi-dose packaging, a convenient and easy-to-use compliance packaging solution that helps patients adhere to their medication regimen.

While Casmus had storage in place to accommodate 50 patients with Dispill®, she wanted to triple the number of customers she was able to serve and help with adherence.

While she had started with just a few patients, Casmus’ business had grown substantially through using Dispill® as her compliance packaging system. She realized that in order to provide Dispill® to the number of patients she hoped, her pharmacy needed to have a designated work area where technicians and pharmacists can sort medications, fill blister packs and hold them for patient pick-up.

Additionally, Casmus wanted to develop a schedule to file insurance claims on a timetable that allowed the pharmacy to receive reimbursement in a timely manner and balance cash flow with bill pay cycles.

Casmus felt the students could help her seize these opportunities.

**Project scope**

The senior design team from the university accepted the task Casmus outlined, and began working on four areas of the project:

- Standardizing the pharmacy’s procedure for filling compliance packaging
- Organizing filled packs to accommodate current volume and future growth
- Creating defined delivery zones for patient deliveries and establishing a standard schedule for delivery to each zone
- Streamlining cash flow through an improved ordering and billing schedule

In particular, the engineering students wanted to create a plan that allowed the shop to grow the number of customers it served, while at the same time improving their medication adherence.

**Solutions**

In the end, the North Carolina State students delivered solutions that addressed each need.

New storage made room for 150 customers, up from 50. The storage was alphabetized and more easily accessible to pharmacists and technicians. The space also included the option for further expansion in the future.

The students also created steps to allow for a standard number of packs to be filled in eight hours, and distributed those steps to The Medicine Shoppe employees.

Looking at the delivery zone, students used a pilot schedule to test the feasibility of short-term refills to get customers in the same zone on the same schedule. The pilot resulted in the creation of an automated spreadsheet that helps schedule deliveries for each zone.

To improve cash flow, the students recommended creating a schedule for each provider that contained how many days prior to placing the product order insurance should be billed. The analysis also contained suggested days of the week to place orders and bill.

**What is ** Dispill®?

Dispill® packaging provides prescribed medication in an all-inclusive blister pack, decreasing the risk of patients mixing up medication or forgetting the time of day to take them. It is easy to implement, requires minimal start-up costs and comes with a free, download-able software package.
“We found that finding the time to reconcile our reimbursements on our own was becoming burdensome, and we felt there was money falling through the cracks,” owner Steve Burdge, R.Ph said.

Serving a small community, it was important to Burdge to spend quality time with his customers and to find a resource that could solve his reconciliation challenges so that he could engage in even more patient care opportunities.

Burdge wasn’t alone. Independent pharmacies across the nation are looking for ways to adapt to the changing landscape of today’s pharmacy, especially since pharmacists often are the most frequent point of contact for patients.

According to the National Institutes of Health, pharmacists see patients an average of up to 10 times more per year than they see their primary care physicians. Because of this, pharmacists build lasting relationships with patients and value efficiencies that help them to better serve their patients.

That’s why, even as they are impacted by new government regulations and rapid changes in reimbursement rates, independent pharmacists are continually looking for ways to capitalize on available resources to serve patients more efficiently and provide additional opportunities for care.

Burdge found his solution in Cardinal Health™ Reconciliation Plus about two years ago. The program takes what a pharmacy has submitted to the insurance company and matches it up with payments to make sure the pharmacy has been paid. The program also aids in creating accurate financial statements — something that is important when determining gross margins and tax liabilities.

The end result for Burdge was a program that improved his task list, offered insight into reimbursements, and provided accurate financial reporting. This allowed him to focus on other important areas of his business.

Whether located in fast-paced urban landscapes or small, rural towns that dot the countryside, independent pharmacists are eyeing more opportunities to face their own set of challenges head-on so that they can improve patient care and grow their businesses.

Micah Pratt, Pharm.D. faced the challenge of figuring out how he could serve not only residents of his town, but those who lived dozens of miles away.

Five years ago, the small community of Olton, Texas, population of 2,000, lost it’s only pharmacy. Pratt was operating his pharmacy, Prescription Shop, about 30 miles down the road in Littlefield, Texas, and saw an opportunity to help fill the gap in care. He began offering prescription deliveries to Olton residents, increasing the number of customers who he served.

But that came with a price.
“We were averaging about 20 to 25 deliveries a day, but from a cost-effectiveness standpoint, that was really getting very expensive for us to have a delivery service,” Pratt said. “One trip is 60 miles and that didn’t include driving all around in town and throughout the surrounding communities.”

After hearing about the benefits of telepharmacy, Pratt opened a Telepharm location in Olton, giving residents the opportunity to have their prescriptions filled and counsel with a pharmacist without having to drive the 60-minute round trip to the nearest pharmacy.

Telepharmacies operate like traditional pharmacies, except the pharmacist reviews prescriptions and counsels patients from a remote location using TelePharm’s cloud-based, HIPAA-compliant software.

This particular resource helped Pratt expand his business to meet a need in Olton. Today, his telepharmacy fills 50 to 60 prescriptions a day and has provided the community with convenient access to a pharmacist. Pratt plans to open a second telepharmacy location about 30 minutes from Littlefield in the small community of Morton, which houses a 13-bed hospital staffed by nurse practitioners.

Other pharmacies have found success utilizing resources such as Reimbursement Consulting Services (RCS) and OutcomesMTM to meet a different need — patient adherence. Non-adherence numbers are staggering. Out of every 100 prescriptions written, only 50 to 70% are filled by a pharmacy, and of those about half are taken properly.

Improving just one patient’s adherence can have a ripple effect for a pharmacy — ultimately increasing prescription counts and decreasing DIR fees. Programs such as RCS provide pharmacies with a holistic view of their patients, ultimately enhancing their patients’ experiences and well-being.

“Over the course of a year, if a patient only came in 9 to 10 times for refills, from a financial perspective for the pharmacist, that’s two lost reimbursements,” said Lisa Kaempf Cardinal Health RCS advisor. “It could also become a dangerous situation for patients. This is giving pharmacists the tools to know which patients to intervene with and see what their struggles are.”

OutcomesMTM, a Cardinal Health company, connects pharmacies with payable MTM services for their eligible patients. These interventions leverage pharmacists’ expertise and relationships in the community to help ensure patients are on the right medications, using them the correct way and achieving desired results.

Through this program, pharmacists can see an OutcomesMTM-eligible patient’s medication history, including any medications they fill at other pharmacies, and alerts for services, such as comprehensive medication reviews (CMRs), adherence consultations and gap closures. The program is free to pharmacists and pharmacies, which are compensated for delivering and documenting the results of MTM services.

For Pratt, expanding patient reach and providing access to a pharmacist is a critical part of a changing landscape in pharmacy. He says it’s important for independent pharmacy owners to take advantage of resources that can be tailored to meet the specific needs of a pharmacy and community.

“We can’t be just business owners anymore,” he said. “We have to be entrepreneurs and think outside the box. Sometimes you have to jump in the deep end and swim. We have to be able to keep up with the big pharmacy world.”

---

Out of every 100 prescriptions written, ONLY 50-70% are filled by a pharmacy and of those 70-75% are not taken properly.
Inventory needs?

Simple solution increases efficiency, cash flow

When Dale Erickson heard about the benefits of implementing an inventory management system that would improve his pharmacy’s cash flow, he was a little skeptical.

As owner of Sardinia Pharmacy in Sardinia, Ohio, Dale Erickson felt like he had a pretty good handle on his inventory, and wasn’t certain a program designed to help manage inventory would benefit his pharmacy.

However, Erickson had begun noticing some inventory issues after examining his financials, and didn’t want to leave any stone unturned if there was a possibility he could improve his cash flow.

For example, he discovered multiple ordering errors, especially with higher-priced items, and noticed some staff preferred an “inventory cushion” when it wasn’t necessary.

This, in turn, caused Erickson to spend extra time correcting those errors by returning items, convincing staff of appropriate levels and establishing his own levels for future purchases.

“Accounting for new growth became exhausting,” Erickson said.

He decided to give a perpetual inventory management system a shot, choosing Cardinal Health™ Inventory Manager (CIM).

To his surprise, he found several areas where his inventory management could be improved within just a few weeks of using the system.

“I immediately saw how I could improve cash flow, but also how to increase turns in my pharmacy,” Erickson said. “It also gave me a tool that would work while I was away from the pharmacy, giving me confidence while on vacation.”
After implementing an inventory management system, he saw his excess inventory drop substantially, allowing him to spend more time working on managing staff, helping customers and focusing on other areas of his business.

Though hesitant at first to integrate a new system into his workflow, he says it has provided a lot of benefits he didn’t expect. For example, his auto-fill program became more efficient because inventory was now under control.

“It took me about 6 months to really see and trust the system, but now I would not even think of operating without one,” he said.

CIM offers “just-in-time” replenishment, driven by automated order points and sophisticated reporting capabilities, while providing dedicated consultative support.

When Erickson first began considering implementing an inventory management system, he filled approximately 270 prescriptions a day, averaging $245,000.

“Our current average inventory runs most efficiently at $175,000 today, and our Rx business is doing an average of 290 per day,” he said. “Simple math shows the impact at $70,000 more in cash and an increase in Rx count. Bottom line now is that it looks and feels much better.”

Erickson’s independent pharmacy is just one of many that have seen the benefits of incorporating a system that prevents inventory swell, says ChrisChappo, director of Cardinal Health™ Inventory Manager (CIM). In the end, it not only saves costs, but helps pharmacists free up their time to focus on other aspects of their business.

“It took me about 6 months to really see and trust the system, but now I would not even think of operating without one.”

“Operationally, it allows you to see more patients,” Chappo said. “It allows you to take time that you would have used walking the shelves to see what you need, and focus on other priorities. You go from inventory purchasing, to true inventory management.”

CIM also has the ability to map 340B orders — a key benefit for pharmacies that dispense 340B-eligible prescriptions or want to serve a wider scope of patients. 340B replenishment shipments can be tracked and compared to dispenses, which ensures 340B inventory is reconciled without having to do so manually.

For Erickson, his process today is to get as many patients as possible on the pharmacy’s automated refill system. In addition to using CIM, Sardinia Pharmacy also has taken advantage of other services.

“We now use Medication Therapy Management (MTM) cases to drive new patients to our auto refill program, which corrects a vast majority of adherence issues in MTM, as well as gives us the ability to meet with patients and explain their current medications,” he said.

By implementing a perpetual inventory management system into his pharmacy’s workflow, he says he can now control his operations while reducing time spent managing inventory.

“I firmly believe that the only way to succeed in today’s pharmacy world as an independent is to operate efficiently and productively with every penny available,” Erickson said.
Spend more time with patients, not inventory

Using a perpetual inventory management system can make managing your prescription inventory easier and more efficient.

Steps to get the most out of your inventory management system

**Step 1:**
Be open to change.
Assess your entire pharmacy work-flow, from ordering to dispensing — uncover opportunities to strengthen efficiency.

**Step 2:**
Take time to learn the full functionality of the tool.
Understand how the solution integrates with your pharmacy management system, supports operational efficiency and provides visibility to actionable insights.

**Step 3:**
Align with stakeholders on inventory goals.
Collaborate with team members to set goals. Goals could include increasing inventory turns, reducing excess inventory, and minimizing time spent on inventory related tasks, such as determining how much to order and when.

**Step 4:**
Identify an internal inventory champion.
Leverage a dedicated resource who can lead inventory management efforts and drive performance while communicating results to stakeholders.

**Step 5:**
Chose a partner who will empower you to succeed.
Identify a collaborative partner who can provide a scalable inventory management solution, which will easily adapt to your unique pharmacy needs.
Pharmacist Katie Westgerdes knows pharmacists have a lot on their plate.

That’s why when she opened the HealthWise Pharmacy at Ohio Northern University, she wanted to put into place what she calls a “decision tree.”

The goal, she says, was to improve workflow and ensure everyone played a role in how the pharmacy operates on a daily basis. As part of this process, she created a workflow decision tree, or responsibility chart, that incorporated each role in the pharmacy, a checklist and workflow chart.

“This helps guide the technicians and … staff with accomplishing everything they need to that day,” Westgerdes said. “It makes sure all the boxes are checked and workflow is efficient.”

One of the biggest barriers independent pharmacists face on a daily basis is having the time for patient interaction. The benefits of engaging staff to take on more day-to-day responsibilities extend to patients as well, she says.

“Many pharmacists in the retail setting don’t feel like they have the time to take care of their patients the way they wish they could,” she said. “The general theory is that if you are utilizing your technicians to the fullest, you will have more time for your patients.”

For example, Westgerdes says if you are using technicians to reconcile medication lists and schedule appointments for MTM, this can free up the pharmacist’s time to complete the MTM appointment with the patient.

“By creating a decision tree, you can help your staff be more efficient and know when to get the pharmacist,” she said.

For example, Westgerdes says decision trees have enabled her technician who manages her MedSync program to take on more responsibilities, while also having more clear parameters for when to elevate a task to the pharmacist.

4 tips to engaging pharmacy staff

Westgerdes recommends the following

✔️ Take it slow.
Implementation is usually the hardest change, she says. Set a pace that works for you.

✔️ Know your staff.
Know how adaptable they are to change, and allow everyone to get used to any workflow or system changes.

✔️ Involve students.
If you have a university nearby with a pharmacy program, bring in students. They have ideas and are eager to get their feet wet.

✔️ Be open to change.
Initial changes may not be the right fit, and you may have to iterate and find what works best for your pharmacy.
Experience

"I use my knowledge about my community to provide a better experience for my customers.

Embedded within the communities they serve, independent pharmacies have a unique perspective that positions them to best recognize the specific needs of their customers. Because they can understand and respond to the unique needs of their community, independent pharmacies offer a pharmacy experience that is second-to-none. Personal touches and conveniences make each customer feel appreciated."
Many pharmacists go the extra mile, but not many travel that mile on the back of a snowmobile.

Except for Andrea Cusack, RPh.

When temperatures dipped dangerously low this past January, and snow blocked driveways and made roads impassable. Cusack, owner and pharmacist of Lake Odessa Pharmacy, enlisted the help of her 15-year-old son to come up with a creative way to ensure her customers received their prescriptions.

Snow drifts had reached waist high in the small community of Lake Odessa, located between Grand Rapids and Lansing, Michigan. Plows weren’t able to clear the roads, and the town had essentially shut down with polar vortex temperatures reaching -30 degrees.

“That’s when a thought popped into my head,” Cusack said. “The conditions weren’t going to get any better, so I got my son to get the snowmobile, and he drove me to a couple’s house. They needed 23 medications between the two of them.”

She offered the same door-to-door service to another couple who needed their medications, but were snowed in at their home.

It was a service Cusack didn’t think twice about providing her customers, and was surprised when the story suddenly went viral. To date, she has done 32 interviews, with stories airing in countries across the world, including Germany, Australia, China and Finland.

Though her prescription numbers were stagnant for several weeks during the polar vortex, after word spread about her going above and beyond, an influx of customers began coming through her pharmacy’s doors.

“People came in and said even though they had never had issues before at their other pharmacies, they wanted to transfer their prescriptions,” Cusack said. “Foot traffic increased, just to buy aspirin or over-the-counter meds, even if they weren’t getting a prescription. That wasn’t happening a lot before.”

To this day, residents of the town with a population of just a few thousand still talk about the snowmobile pharmacist.

“We are still getting new patients every day,” she said. “I feel like that’s saying something for the size of our community.”

Pharmacist doesn’t let snow stop her in her tracks

Andrea Cusack’s story is a reminder of the essential role independent pharmacies play in our communities, and how they often go the extra mile when it comes to patient care.

The Lake Odessa Pharmacy owner’s drive to integrate the business into the community has been a priority since she opened a little over a year ago. Here are some of the ways Lake Odessa Pharmacy has become a part of its community:

- Event and team sponsorships
- Involvement in community clean-up days
- Built a float for the local parade
- Bought a steer from the 4-H fair to support students
- Chamber meeting attendance
- Donations of canned goods for every flu shot given
Sometimes the best solutions aren’t the most traditional ones.

Just ask Amy Fanous, Director of the ONU HealthWise Rural Mobile Health Clinic at Ohio Northern University in Ada, Ohio. Although mobile health clinics are becoming a popular way of reaching underserved populations, brick and mortar clinics far outnumber them.
Whether by offering vaccinations, answering patients’ health questions or providing services like blood pressure checks and mammograms, mobile clinics can be a useful tool for pharmacies to increase their reach. They’re also just one example of how community pharmacies can think creatively and expand their services to fulfill an unmet need in the community. In the case of the mobile clinic, which is operated through the ONU HealthWise program out of Ohio Northern University’s College of Pharmacy, the clinic helped reach a sector of the population that was underserved.

“We don’t have the number of healthcare providers necessary to take care of the community’s needs in our county,” Fanous said. “We had an opportunity to make an impact in our community.”

In addition to offering adult immunizations and tobacco cessation services, the mobile clinic also provides medication reviews, education about chronic diseases, blood pressure checks, health risk assessments, and cholesterol, glucose and hemoglobin A1C screenings.

Like any new program, the mobile clinic experienced growing pains during the first two years. Although the clinic was mobile, it didn’t include an actual RV.

“We had to pack up all our supplies and pharmacy students in the car and set up clinics at food pantries or wherever would have us,” Fanous said.

That uphill climb to integrate into the community paid off in the end.

“When we did get the bus, it wasn’t intimidating to people because we had already established relationships in the community,” she said.

Now the 38-foot mobile clinic operates on a monthly schedule, visiting places in the community anywhere between one and five days a week. Priorities include preventative health education with focuses on tobacco use and obesity, better coordination of healthcare services, immunizations, medication reconciliation, and strategies to manage medication, especially in those who have chronic conditions.

“The mobile clinic is a less intimidating way to get access to healthcare,” Fanous said. “I’ve had a lot of patients say they wouldn’t have gone to the doctor for services if not for the mobile health clinic.”

Though opening a mobile health clinic isn’t feasible in every community, Fanous encourages pharmacists to evaluate the needs of their own communities and come up with creative solutions that help address those specific gaps in care.

“I have learned that it is so important to take the time to establish a relationship with those who live and work in the community,” she said. “The best way to comprehend issues that community members are facing is by spending time out in the community.”

This consistency has allowed the clinic to build a positive rapport and trust with residents – increasing the likelihood that people will seek out medical care when it’s needed, Fanous said. It’s also provided a good source of feedback so services can be improved or tweaked.

“Concrete feedback from the community being served has been incredibly helpful,” she said. “This feedback allows for the formation of a more robust program that is better prepared to fulfill its mission and one that patients can actually use and depend on.”

“I’ve had a lot of patients say they wouldn’t have gone to the doctor for services if not for the mobile health clinic.”
In a study conducted by Nielsen, a leader in consumer trends, you have two distinct groups of customers. The first group we call the heavy shopper. They are one out of four customers and make up 75 percent of your business. The other group, light shoppers, are the other three out of four, but account for only 25 percent of your business.1 How do you spot these different kinds of shoppers in your store?

**Heavy shoppers are:**
- Lower in income, likely under $30,000 per year
- 55 or older
- Lower prevalence of kids

**Meet Carla Campbell**
- **Age:** Retired but I still have spunk!
- **Kids:** 3, 7 grandkids
- **Hobbies:** Dancing, bridge
- **Status:** Single and looking!

**A little about me:**
I live with type 2 diabetes, so taking care of myself is important. I stop by my local pharmacy every other week to pick up the essentials. The expert staff there really keeps me on track.

I’m on a fixed income, so I shop with my tight budget in mind. I love my local pharmacy because it’s smaller and easy to get around.

**My pharmacist, Lloyd, says:**
I have served Carla for years. We are close by and give her the personalized service she can’t get in another store.

I know money is on her mind, so I make sure I offer great Leader® options and match competitor prices so I can help her stay in her budget, and so she won’t need to go anywhere else.

**Light shoppers are:**
- A little more affluent than heavy shoppers
- More likely to be under 45 and have young kids
- Higher percentage of African-Americans relative to heavy shoppers

**Meet Carrie Carson**
- **Age:** A woman never tells!
- **Kids:** 2
- **Hobbies:** Gardening, yoga
- **Status:** Married

**A little about me:**
I’m a busy working mom, but I make health a family priority. I’m trying to lose that last 10 pounds, and I take a multivitamin to keep my energy up.

I am fortunate that my kids only need medicine a few times a year, so I don’t have a “go-to” pharmacy. But, my parents are older so I need to find a store that can help me take care of them and my family.

**My pharmacist, Lloyd, says:**
I don’t see Carrie as often as I’d like. We met when her husband, David, needed a specific brace that only I had.

As we talked, I realized that there were ways I could help her with her aging parents and her family’s on-the-go lifestyle, too.
How are you conquering the Conversion Conundrum

Only 6 out of 100 leave a chain store without buying something in the front end.

But 56 out of 100 leave an independent pharmacy without buying something in the front end.

These numbers present you with a great opportunity.

Begin converting these customers today with products and services for the front-end of your store.
Because they provide convenient and cost-effective access to healthcare, independent pharmacists are driven to seek additional ways to personally serve the people in their communities. Advocating for independent pharmacy, improved pharmacy laws, and patient healthcare rights, as a whole, is especially important in today’s environment. As more independent pharmacists are getting involved in the conversation and taking action, they are creating significant change and positively impacting the communities they serve.
"I always wondered about those women and how difficult it was for them to be one or two women in a class of men," she said.

Those thoughts stayed with her as Soliman entered the pharmacy profession, and years later when she felt her own struggle of balancing family with work, she realized that although women had progressed in the profession, there still wasn’t a strong enough support network in place.

“I missed my son’s game one night because of work, and I felt pretty bad about it,” she recalled. “That night, I went to lie down and thought about how all I wanted to do was ask other pharmacists how they balance their personal and professional lives.”

In May 2017, she founded The Pharmacist Moms Group with the goal of creating an extensive network of resources and support for pharmacists who understand the challenges and rewards of balancing all areas of their lives, including motherhood.

In just two years, the group has drawn 25,000 active members, many of whom participate on the group’s Facebook page that featured more than 2 million posts, comments and reactions in 2018.

“What our group has done is showcase that by coming together and sharing our experiences, we are much stronger,” Soliman said. “I’ve had women reach out to me and say how stressed out they are, but by getting into the group, realize they aren’t the only ones. That’s the goal - to make these women realize they aren’t the only ones and they can manage their home, pharmacy and relationships.”

In addition to an online forum through Facebook, the group also holds meet-ups in communities across the United States.

For more information, go to pharmacistmomsgroup.com.
Theresa Tolle considers herself to have been in the right place at the right time to make a difference.

As an elected leader for the American Pharmacists Association and as a pharmacist at Bay Street Pharmacy in Sebastian, Fla., Tolle participated in a drug pricing roundtable with patients, advocate groups and U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar in Miami in July 2018.

For Tolle, it was an opportunity to advocate for her patients, who she felt had a right to know if they could save money by paying for prescriptions out of pocket instead of through insurance. At that time, “gag clauses” had been included in contracts among pharmacies, insurers and pharmacy benefit managers, preventing pharmacists from telling patients about the best prescription drug prices available to them.

The end result was a bipartisan effort called the Patient’s Right to Know Drug Prices Act. During the signing later that year in Washington, D.C., Tolle was present.

But her advocacy wasn’t a one-time effort. She routinely advocates on behalf of independent pharmacists, has built relationships with her representatives and typically visits Washington, D.C. at least once a year to campaign for causes important to her pharmacy and overall industry.

“One of the main reasons to be involved legislatively is because so many entities are trying to take away our profession,” Tolle said. “Some examples are mandatory mail order, retroactive DIR fees, MAC pricing, below-cost reimbursement and many other things. If we don’t fight for ourselves and our patients, who will?”

Tolle says most state pharmacy associations have dedicated pages on their websites that are updated about pending bills during legislative sessions, making it easy for independent pharmacists to stay up-to-date on current news.

“I think that all of us need to understand that we need to be paying attention to the trends that negatively affect our profession, and stand up and communicate about it,” Tolle said. “We need to be speaking to legislators, other elected officials, agencies, boards of pharmacy and consumer groups.”

As women now comprise more than half of all pharmacists, they play a unique — and important role — in particular, Tolle said.

“Women need to make sure that they find their voice and speak up directly, or by influencing our patients to speak up as well,” she said.

Engaging with legislation to make an impact

**Best practice list:**

Whether it’s at the local, state or federal level, there are several ways to advocate for policies that impact independent pharmacies and their patients. Theresa Tolle, pharmacist at Bay Street Pharmacy in Sebastian, Fla., recommends the following ways to get involved.

**Get to know your legislators or their staff.**

“It is easy to do this by going to their local district office,” Tolle says. “Many people assume they have to go to the capitol during a legislative session, but actually developing a relationship over the long term is a better way to advocate.”

Another way to engage is by inviting your representatives to your pharmacy for a tour and to chat about any issues that are important to you. The National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA) provides a valuable toolkit to help you get started. The toolkit is available by going to ncpanet.org/advocacy and clicking on the “Advocacy Tools” arrow on the left side of the webpage.

**Write letters.**

Write emails or letters to your representatives. Let them know about where you stand on issues that impact your pharmacy and your customers. You can also write letters to the editor in local and state-wide publications that may inspire other pharmacists to get involved, or ask your customers to write letters as well.

**Make a friend.**

One of the best ways to “make a friend” of a legislator is by volunteering for that person’s campaign — showing early support before that person wins an election, Tolle says.

**Donate.**

If you don’t have time to meet with your representatives, or don’t want to put your pharmacy into the public spotlight, donations are one of the most impactful ways you can get involved. Donate to organizations that represent the best interests of independent pharmacies, or to representatives at any level who share your views.
This spring, historic flooding ravaged eastern Nebraska and western Iowa after the Elkhorn and Platte rivers breached their levees, devastating many communities that suddenly found themselves under water.

With thousands of people evacuated and others stranded, ensuring residents received their medications became what many people believed to be an insurmountable challenge.

Tyler Johnson, Director of Operations, and the staff at Community Pharmacy in the small town of Gretna, Nebraska, saw the destruction first-hand. Getting medications to neighboring communities and facilities that relied on their services became nearly impossible.

“It was getting very difficult to deliver necessary medications to our health partners’ residents due to road closures because of the flooding,” he said. “We saw with our own eyes the devastation to homes and businesses throughout the state and we knew we had to do whatever we could to help those in need, especially those we service in the nursing homes — some of the most vulnerable individuals out there.”

Johnson and the technicians worked tirelessly to change many medication delivery routes to what ended up being very long, circuitous paths in order to reach communities throughout Nebraska and Iowa.

“We did not do it alone,” Johnson said. “With limited options, we reached out to local fire departments, state patrol, game and parks, and the National Guard for assistance in getting medications delivered as quickly as possible.”

Reaching one of the hardest hit areas, Fremont, Nebraska, would require even more creativity. The town, located about 40 miles northwest of Omaha, sits along the Platte River. Washed away country roads had been replaced by raging rapids, with some homes completely missing from where they once stood.

“One of our employees contacted the National Guard to ask for assistance or suggestions as to how we would able to get across the flooded water,” Johnson said. “That was when the brainstorming went into overdrive and how the connections happened.”

They came up with the solution of using an airboat to reach residents stuck in severely flooded areas.

“From there the idea took off and we set up the location and drop time, and the rest is history,” Johnson said.

Ironically, what inspired the staff at Community Pharmacy to take action in these extraordinary circumstances were the ordinary circumstances they normally operated under.

“We needed that day to be like any other day where they could count on us.”

“What pushed us was the commitment to those we provide service to everyday,” Johnson said. “We needed that day to be like any other day where they could count on us. These individuals are our mothers, fathers and grandparents who needed their medication. We knew the importance of it and were determined to find a way.”

Whether it’s during a crisis or an average working day, Johnson says it’s important to be accessible to patients.

“The field of healthcare is to serve,” he said. “Not only when the time is easy and fast, but all the time, even when faced with a challenge. Our pharmacy likes to think outside the box and to look for opportunities to assist and help any way we can. This is just what we do every day for our patients.”
Independent pharmacies are constantly striving to meet the needs of their communities and stay ahead of the competition. As the healthcare industry and patient needs change, the addition of services not only differentiates independent pharmacies in their local markets, but also diversifies revenue sources. This enables pharmacists to become even more entrenched in the overall healthcare system as a patient care resource.
Building your best immunization program

One of the most successful and influential ways independent pharmacies have been able to expand their reach is through offering convenient immunizations to customers.

In addition to meeting an important healthcare need for residents, offering vaccinations can also improve a pharmacy’s bottom line. When we look across a wide range of claims, on average, vaccines yield a higher reimbursement rate than oral-dispensed pharmaceuticals. When making those comparisons, it is easy to see that immunizations can make sense from both a healthcare and business standpoint.

Whether you’ve been operating a successful immunization program for years or are just getting started, there are always opportunities to refine and evolve your offering. Katie Barthelmas, Senior Marketing Manager with Cardinal Health, offers a few recommendations to help you, regardless of where you are in your immunization offering journey:

Know what your state allows you to offer.
Barthelmas shared that there are typically two tiers of vaccines pharmacists can offer: routine and travel.

“Today, in all states, a pharmacist can offer some level of vaccinations,” she said. “Regulations vary as far as the specific vaccines and ages, so it is always smart to check with your State Board of Pharmacy before starting.”

Most states will allow some level of routine vaccinations, such as the flu, shingles, MMR and Tdap. However, not all states allow pharmacists to offer travel vaccines, she said. Knowing what your state permits you to offer allows you to maximize the services you can offer your community.

Become a certified immunizer.
If you are not yet certified to offer vaccines through your pharmacy, the APhA offers a Pharmacy-Based Immunization Delivery certificate training program. To get started, visit www.pharmacist.com under Resources > Immunization Center > Pharmacy-Based Immunization Delivery.

However, licensed pharmacists who have finished pharmacy school within the last 5 to 10 years may already be certified since many schools are required to include curriculum that incorporates this type of certification.

Barthelmas suggests pharmacists check with their state board of pharmacy to verify if there are any additional state requirements for pharmacists to vaccinate patients. Also, be sure to stay up-to-date with your CPR and bloodborne pathogen training on an annual basis.

Complete any additional requirements.
Depending on the state where you practice pharmacy, you may be required to obtain a physician-signed protocol. Barthelmas says understanding your state board of pharmacy’s immunization requirements is essential.

"Most states require a physician-signed vaccine protocol," she said. “Pharmacies should make sure they are reviewing the vaccine protocols annually with their oversight physician to ensure clinical accuracy and checking to make sure the protocol is still current from a regulatory perspective."

Know who you’re serving.
In addition to the patients you serve, keep in mind the patients you would like to target to grow your vaccine practice and your pharmacy business, Barthelmas said.

“It’s important to understand your audience,” she said. “Take a closer look at the vaccines that are permissible for pharmacist-delivery in your state and assess the opportunity. For example, populations over 65 can benefit from a pneumonia vaccine, populations over 50 can benefit from a shingles vaccine, and so on.”

Look for opportunities beyond patients coming to you.
In addition to offering vaccines inside your pharmacy, Barthelmas says one of the ways you can make the greatest impact is offering your services outside your pharmacy’s walls.

“Partner with long-term care facilities, reach out to local school nurses and check into offering flu shots during lunch hours, and get in touch with local businesses, organizations and universities,” she said. “These are all things we highly encourage.”

When you do this, she says, your efforts open up a new world.

“Think holistically how you can transform and evolve into offering more direct patient care services,” she said. “It goes so far beyond just offering vaccines.”
How pharmacists are evolving their business to meet community needs

Just one day a year, the county health department visits the small rural community of Sycamore, Ohio, to offer residents flu shots.

For Don and Linda Fillmore, owners of Fillmore Pharmacy, the single opportunity to get protection for the upcoming flu season wasn’t enough.
Many people were being missed,” Linda Fillmore recalled.

As community pharmacists, they had a unique vantage point to see gaps in healthcare services that were impacting the residents in their northern Ohio town. They realized they could evolve a service that is commonly offered in today’s pharmacies to help fill those gaps.

For many years, pharmacies have offered in-store vaccinations for patients, but by evolving this service and taking it on the road through on-site vaccination clinics, the Fillmores could better meet the community’s needs and reach workers who may not have the time to make a trip into the pharmacy.

“We know the owners of a factory near us that employs about 40 people,” Linda Fillmore said. “We asked if they would be interested in us coming to their place of work before the workday started to offer flu vaccines to anyone who wanted one.”

The Fillmores reminded the owners of the importance of being immunized, and that the service would benefit the factory because fewer workers would be absent or sick.

“We offered a special price to the workers for the shot, or suggested that the owners foot the bill as a nice perk,” she said. “Turns out their company insurance covered it 100%.”

In addition to reaching workers whose schedules and busy lives don’t align with the pharmacy’s hours of operation, on-site vaccination clinics can better reach patients who don’t have the ability to make a trip to the pharmacy.

Similarly, at Yost Pharmacy in Mason, Ohio, pharmacist Sarah McClain has run a community vaccine clinic for the past three years in which she has partnered with local retirement homes to provide residents with flu vaccinations.

Last year, McClain operated nine clinics across three different facilities, delivering about 550 high-dose flu vaccines. Of those, approximately 80% of the doses issued were eligible for billing through Medicare Part B.

By partnering with the Cardinal Health Medical Benefit Billing program, the process of billing the patients’ health plans for issuing the vaccines, in addition to being reimbursed by payers for the cost of the vaccine, was straightforward and seamless.

Offering on-site clinics also provided a secondary benefit for McClain’s pharmacy — some of the patients she has met at the vaccine clinics have become regular pharmacy customers.

“‘It’s extremely important for the independent pharmacist to look for and fill needs of the community. Some ideas may work, and some may not. But you always have to keep trying and keep evolving.’”

After finding success at their first on-site clinic at a nearby factory, the following year, the Fillmores contacted their local school superintendent about conducting a clinic for employees prior to the start of the school day — again, emphasizing the importance of being vaccinated against the flu.

“He was very enthusiastic about this and it currently works the same as the factory clinic,” Linda Fillmore said.

The next year, they evolved their service one step further by meeting with the manager of another local factory.

“They asked us also to do a clinic at their sister plant in the next town,” she said.

By identifying a need that wasn’t being met, and then rolling out a program in a manner that made sense for the pharmacy’s size and abilities at the time, the Fillmores were able to expand their business and better serve their community.

“It’s extremely important for the independent pharmacist to look for and fill needs of the community,” Don Fillmore said. “Some ideas may work, and some may not. But you always have to keep trying and keep evolving.”
Safe medication practices for life.

Celebrating the 10th anniversary of pharmacists’ engagement in Generation Rx

Retail independent pharmacists have been key drivers of Generation Rx since we launched the program in 2009.

We knew that, as deeply trusted healthcare providers, you play a powerful role in fighting prescription drug misuse in your communities. And we believed you would help bring to life the Generation Rx prevention education messages.

And you have! Since 2009, you have helped reach people across the country with simple but critical messages about safe medication practices:

• Take medications exactly as prescribed.
• Never share your medications with others.
• Store prescriptions securely; dispose of medications properly.
• Teach others about using medications safely.

With your help, we have reached over 1.6 million people of all ages.

This year, as we celebrate the 10th anniversary of Generation Rx, we also celebrate you.

Thank you for all you do to make your communities healthier and safer.

Generation Rx is an evidence-informed prevention education program created through a partnership of the Cardinal Health Foundation and The Ohio State University College of Pharmacy. Its engaging, age-specific resources include interactive presentations, activities, discussion starters and more.

The resources are easy for anyone to use to lead prevention education sessions in schools, community centers, faith-based organizations, senior centers — wherever people are gathered.

Generation Rx K-12 resources are based on best practices in prevention and educational delivery:

• Search Institute’s Developmental Assets Framework
• How Learning Works, highlighting seven research-based principals for teaching
• Understanding by Design, a framework to guide curriculum, assessment and instruction

In celebration of the 10th anniversary of Generation Rx, we’ve relaunched our website, GenerationRx.org, with a new look and more user-friendly navigation. Be sure to check it out!

Learn more at GenerationRx.org

Brought to you by:

The Ohio State University
College of Pharmacy

Cardinal Health
Foundation
The information provided in “Independently Healthy” (the Magazine) is for information purposes and serves to further enhance the goals of Retail Independent Pharmacy. Cardinal Health uses reasonable care in preparing the Magazine. However, Cardinal Health does not guarantee the accuracy or completeness of the materials, and makes no representations about the suitability of the information and services for any particular purpose. The content provided in this Magazine is not intended as a substitute for professional advice. You should consult with professional advisors familiar with your particular factual situation for advice concerning legal, tax and accounting matters and rules and regulations governing the practice of pharmacy.

©2019 Cardinal Health. All Rights Reserved. CARDINAL HEALTH, the Cardinal Health LOGO and ESSENTIAL TO CARE, are trademarks or registered trademarks of Cardinal Health. All other marks are property of their respective owners. Lit. No. 1PD19-942936 (10/2019)