

Automating the dispensing process for compliance packs to ensure staff have more time to speak with patients and to reduce the risk of medication errors

Customer profile

Pearl Chemist Group consists of 14 independent pharmacies serving South London. The pharmacists work closely with patients and other healthcare professionals to advise on the best treatments and how to use medicines safely and effectively.

The pharmacy provides medication adherence pill packs to patients with complex medication regimes to help ensure that patients are taking the right dose of the right drug at the right time. These were previously filled manually by staff at each of its branches. However the packs are now filled by an automated Omnicell VBM filling machine at its pharmacy in Tooting.



The goals of implementation

- Consolidate the filling of medication adherence packs into one pharmacy instead of 14.
- Free up pharmacy staff time across all branches so they could spend more time supporting patients on initiatives like medicines usage reviews and value added services.
- Speed up the checking process for the packs.
- Improve patient safety and remove the risk of human error.

“It’s allowed us to free up both our pharmacists and pharmacy technicians so they can spend more time at the counter and in the consulting room with patients. Ultimately it’s helping us to provide the best possible care to our patients.”

Mayank Patel, Director and Superintendent Pharmacist, Pearl Chemist Group

Benefits already realised by installing an Omnicell VBM

Efficient filling of medication adherence packs

The machine is currently filling all packs for 10 out of its 14 branches and will take on pack filling for the remaining three in the next few months. It also fills packs for patients being discharged from nearby St George's Hospital in London. The machine receives the electronic medication administration records from the branches and then fills and checks the packs at a rate of up to 30-40 packs per hour. Time saved in producing the packs has been one of the biggest benefits realised to date. For example instead of it taking up to 10 minutes for the pharmacist to check packs, it now takes them a matter of seconds due to the vision checking and RFID technology used by the VBM.

Freeing up staff time

Staff in the 10 branches no longer have to spend hours deblistering medication and then filling and checking medication adherence packs and as a result they are free to spend more time dealing with patients. Each pharmacy now receives the ready filled and checked packs once they have been produced by the VBM and dispenses them to patients. As well as allowing staff to focus on patient care, it also means the group can focus on other revenue streams such as medicine usage reviews and private services.

Improving patient safety

By using the VBM the group has been able to reduce the risk of human error in filling the packs. In a climate where pharmacies are being expected to deliver more for less this is essential. The VBM machine uses vision checking technology which checks the drugs packed based on size, shape and colour and takes corrective action in the event of any errors. The machine is also able to visually check manual adds which are not filled by the machine's cassettes. This system helps to reduce the risk of medication errors for patients.

Improving industry standards

The pharmacy received a 'good' rating in their latest GPhC inspection with the inspector particularly impressed with the VBM. Prior to installing the VBM the pharmacy had only ever received a 'satisfactory' rating. The GPhC were particularly impressed with the audit trail that is provided for each medication packed by the VBM. It means every pill can be tracked and is fully traceable to a particular patient in the event of a medication recall.

