2020 Chain Market Report

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80% 98%
24% 16%

by the *ComputerTalk* editorial staff

Despite the disruption the coronavirus has caused, pharmacy and its technology partners appear to have weathered this unprecedented event. Pharmacies continue to invest in technology solutions to increase the efficiency of the workplace, while invoking new approaches to not only improve patient outcomes but also increase prescription volume.
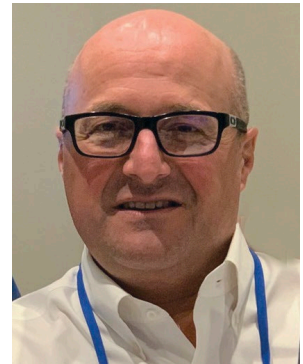
THAT SAID, WE FOUND THAT, IN THE MAIN, chains continue to add new interfaces and applications to the pharmacy systems. In one case, this involved a smartphone app to improve customer service. From an operational standpoint, we found adding automation to the filling process and packaging of prescriptions to improve medication adherence were steps taken. Ways to improve inventory management through an interface were also mentioned.

Two chains reported plans to upgrade the pharmacy system to the latest version. One reason given was to fix bugs in the software and come into compliance with legal requirements. Another was to have more interfaces. On balance, our survey indicates

David Cippel
President
Klingensmith's Drug Stores

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satisfaction with the support being received by the current vendor.

However, this was not without a wish list of what chains would like to see added. Here we found one chain that would like an easier way for two-way communication with patients and another a way to

streamline medication synchronization. Adding a hybrid module to document patient encounters and bill medical insurance from the same platform was mentioned. Embracing cloud architecture made the wish list as well.

SAVING MONEY

The technology vendors are saving pharmacies money. The med sync program at the pharmacies in Harps Food Stores is an example of this. According to Robert Acord, director of pharmacy, "this smoothes out prescription volume, which allows us to staff more efficiently." David Cippel, president of Klingensmith's Drug Stores, points to an inventory management program from Datarithm he installed that reduced his prescription drug inventory at his seven locations by $150,000 between January and June.

Better inventory management was noted by more than one chain as a focus because of the cash it can free up.

Receiving electronic prescriptions rather than paper prescriptions was cited by one chain as saving time, and thus money, in prescription processing. **CT**

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