

Speaker 1: Welcome to the Pharmacy Podcast Show. You're listening to the first and only podcast dedicated to the business of pharmacy. Hear from independent pharmacy owners, leading entrepreneurs, political strategists, healthcare technology trends, career coaching, interviews about our pharmacy industry and more. Be sure to subscribe to the show via iTunes and leave us a voice comment from our contact section on the website. You can find all of our episodes at [pharmacypodcast.com](http://pharmacypodcast.com).

Nicolle McClure: Hi and welcome back to the Pharmacy Podcast Show, I'm Nicolle McClure, co-host of the show and co-founder of GRX Marketing, back again to talk with another pharmacy owner on services that independent pharmacists can use in their location to help grow their business, try to bring you ideas and insights each month on marketing your pharmacy in this changing industry.

Nicolle McClure: So with me today, I have the owner of the Medicap Pharmacy in Olyphant and also he is the President of the Pennsylvania Pharmacist Association, Eric Pusey. Welcome to the show.

Eric Pusey: Good morning, how are you?

Nicolle McClure: Good. How are you doing today?

Eric Pusey: Very good, thank you.

Nicolle McClure: Thank you so much for being here. I appreciate your time.

Eric Pusey: My pleasure.

Nicolle McClure: So what we're going to talk about today is compliance packaging and adherence. I think it's something that independent pharmacies are starting to offer a lot more because they see the value in it not only for their patient but also for the pharmacy itself. So I guess tell me a little bit about how you got started in it and how long you've been offering it to your patients.

Eric Pusey: Sure. Compliance packaging is probably the first way we started to really get involved with our patients on a really patient to patient basis. And what it involves is doing what we call weekly medication boxes or weekly medication planners and it allows the pharmacist to have complete control over the patient's medication profile, their drug interactions, the timing of their medications. Probably most importantly, just having access to the physicians that if there are any issues we can discuss them in a timely manner, make any changes in their medication packaging and it really helps to make a difference.

Nicolle McClure: So from an operation standpoint, if you had a pharmacist listening to this and they're thinking about getting into packaging, what was the greatest challenge that you saw to implement it and get it going?

Eric Pusey: The first issue was how do we do it? Because there are really no clear guidelines. There are many different kinds of packaging, implementation programs that are available. And what I always say is let's start with the simplest and let's start with the most direct way of doing it, whatever that may be for you. It can involve blister packing, it can involve weekly medication boxes. It can involve higher tech equipment such as daily planning which combines all the medications to one. There's a whole variety of different ways. But the most important thing is to decide which way is going to be best for the patient that you initially plan to serve.

Nicolle McClure: So would you say that your program's kind of evolved since you've started it?

Eric Pusey: Oh there's no question it has evolved. For right now, we're using three different types of packaging implementation techniques, and that's where it all started. We started with the simplest which is the boxes and from there, we've got to a little bit more advanced technologies.

Nicolle McClure: Okay and so when you first started, how did you let patients know about the program that this was available and what was their initial feedback on it? Were they excited or were they kind of apprehensive about it?

Eric Pusey: The initial request that we had actually came from a physician's office which is obviously the best referral you can ever get. Once we had that initial referral, the doctor asked if we can do it and we said, "Sure we can." And then we tried to figure out how we were going to do it. And it was just a matter of making sure that we got the patient's medication. We actually met with the patient or their caregiver, whatever it might've been and we went over, picked up all of their medications, discussed with the caregiver or the patient, which medications at what time of day they had preferences for. Because again, we didn't want to totally disrupt their whole lifestyle and that seems to be one of the biggest challenges that we face also is that when there's either changes, or we feel that a recommendation needs to be made, to make a change. How did the patient or that member react to that change? And that's sometimes a challenge for us.

Nicolle McClure: With that, what would you say is the biggest benefit of starting the program from an owner's perspective?

Eric Pusey: From an owner's perspective, there's no question it is essentially almost like an auto-refill program. It also allows you to fill medication on a regular basis. Every 30 days, every 28 days, you're going to be filling that medication for the patient. You're assured you can make your medications on time, it does increase profitability.

Nicolle McClure: Okay. So kind of shifting a little bit towards adherence, that kind of seems to be a buzz word that you hear about lately. Do you feel as a pharmacist, it's partly

your responsibility to help patients with this and if so, what opportunities are there for that beyond just the packaging?

Eric Pusey: There certainly is an opportunity for pharmacists and there is a moral responsibility as part of our professional creed, is to take care of our patients and make sure that they are taking their medications properly. That in itself is a challenge. Many patients don't want our assistance and from a marketing standpoint, trying to get that point out, that we're not out there to change everyone's world. We're out there to change the individuals that we can, that we can indeed have a positive influence on. So when we look at the relationship that we have with our patients, that's what's important. We build on that relationship. We know with our patients we're dealing with, and who needs our assistance more and we offer it to them first.

Nicolle McClure: Okay. How do you see, over the next few years, helping patients stay adherent with their medications evolving? Do you think new techniques are going to pop up? Or is it just working that patient relationship and keeping them engaged?

Eric Pusey: It's really a matter of technology in my opinion. Right now, there are so many different programs on the market and so many pharmacists have developed their own individual adherence programs. They're all a challenge. I find it to be difficult. I've gone through ... I'm on my third program right now, because I have not found the program that I personally feel most comfortable with. It is a labor intensive program. It is a system that needs to be monitored everyday. Because again, patients needs change. It's not just a simple auto-refill where the system automatically pops things into a cue. You have to sync the medications. You have to time the medications. You have to make sure that if there is an addition, that everything else has to be synchronized to that particular patient's needs.

Nicolle McClure: Okay. But overall you feel that the benefits outweigh the challenges?

Eric Pusey: Again, the benefits 100% outweigh the disadvantages. And the main reason is not only financially but professionally. It certainly does help you professionally to feel better about your profession, your own practice, but it also helps you and your star ratings. Star ratings are an important factor and without our insurance companies, since most of our patients who are on adherence, not all, but are Medicare related, we find that it does certainly increase our star rating and our performance in that department.

Nicolle McClure: Okay. And you know since your initial start with the program, you had the that first doctor's office reach out to you, do you find that other physicians are open to the program as well or ...

Eric Pusey: There's no question that is a marketing tool that we use and that's where, and I know this is going to be a plug for GRX Marketing, however, we need to have the assistance of our marketing team to go out and to detail the physicians, because they need to know that our services are available. Because if they

don't, they're going to either send the business someplace else or another biggest source of referrals comes from the nursing support.

Nicolle McClure: Okay. Anything else you know, that you want to add on if again, a pharmacy owner is listening to the podcast and you know maybe they've started it and they kind of have hit a stopping point, a stuck point or maybe they haven't taken that leap. Any other words of advice you can give them?

Eric Pusey: Certainly. Don't give up. Keep on trying until we reach a point where the numbers make sense and you'll hear different numbers out there whether it be 25, 50, 100 patients. If we can get 25 patients, you're doing well. If you do 50, that's great. Don't give up, because there's several different systems out there as I had mentioned. But if you don't find one that is working for you, you need to go out and find one that will be.

Nicolle McClure: Great. Well thank you so much for your time. I appreciate you chatting with me about this important component of the pharmacy industry.

Eric Pusey: Well thank you very much. It's been my pleasure.

Nicolle McClure: All right. Thank you.

Speaker 1: We hope you enjoyed another episode of The Pharmacy Podcast Show. Be sure to subscribe to the show and send us a voice message with your ideas and comments from our contact section on the website.

Speaker 1: Did you know we developed digital health content to assist with business development and marketing efforts? Learn how we can help you drive more patients, physicians and targeted leads to your website. Contact us today at [pharmacypodcast.com](http://pharmacypodcast.com).