

# PHARMACIUM DISPENSARY CORNER #2

By Marta Stybowski.



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Welcome to our second article of dispensary corner, in which we will focus on the key principles of our design paradigm. If you missed our introductory dispensary corner #1 article, it can be found in the January digital issue of *Retail Pharmacy*. [www.retailpharmacymagazine.com.au/eMag/2019/Jan19/](http://www.retailpharmacymagazine.com.au/eMag/2019/Jan19/).

Once any compromises arising from pharmacy shape, space or budget have been made and key requirements have been scoped, these principles provide a guide to the creation of any dispensary, as well as directing and prioritising design features.

## Hierarchy principle

At the most elementary level, the importance of the dispensary to the overall pharmacy business needs to be examined. Should the dispensary be considered first in the order of priority, followed by the retail offering? Or should this order be reversed?

Our view is that the starting point is always to focus on the dispensary first. While various factors such as location, business model, etc, will influence the dispensary/retail split, the dispensary typically continues to remain the main driver of the pharmacy business, with the 2018 Guild Digest stating that, on average, in Australian community



pharmacies, almost 71 per cent of total pharmacy revenue is generated by the dispensary (Pharmacy Guild of Australia, Guild Digest 2018). Furthermore, a case for causal connection between dispensary sales influencing or contributing to front of shop sales could comfortably be made, while the reverse is a more difficult proposition.

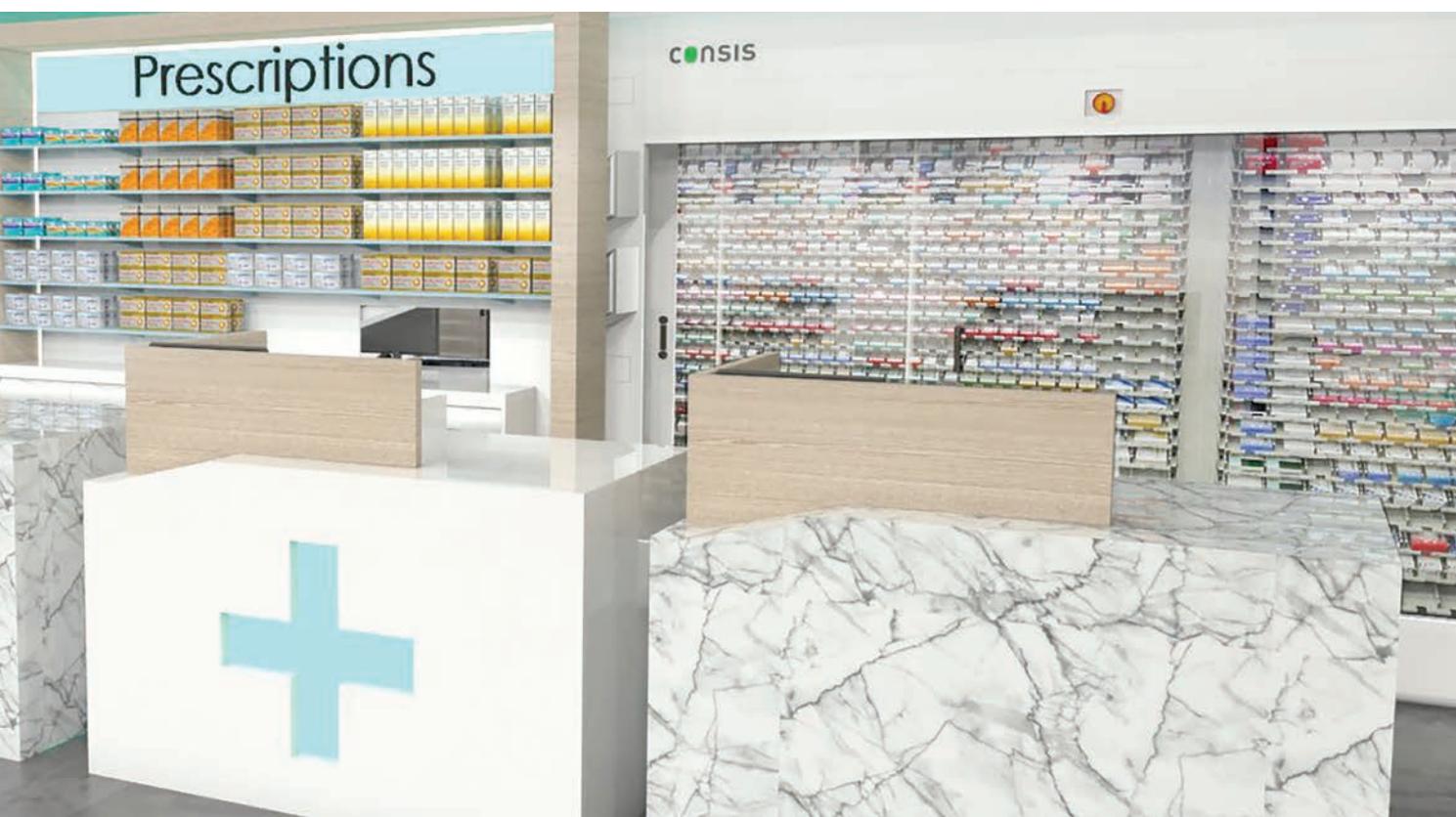
However, despite the evidence for the importance of the dispensary to a community pharmacy business, this order of priority is a common issue that we see when consulting with owners complaining about their existing dispensaries – and too often their dispensary does not work as it should, because it was originally designed second in the order of importance. Taking such a priority approach may in turn lead to dispensary space or shape

limitations that result in significant inefficiencies and a negative impact on overall business performance.

## Simplicity principle

Where should the 'scripts ready and waiting' area be positioned? What about the safe? Or the fridge? All too often, these decisions are made based on space availability rather than frequency of usage. A useful heuristic for planning where dispensary features should be positioned is by asking the question, 'Does the location enable simplest possible access?', and then considering who needs the access and what tasks will be performed.

To bring this all together, working through a simple list of key staff resources, key value-add functions they perform and what they require



access to, provides the foundation of the dispensary design. The secret to a successful design that delivers both efficiency and effectiveness to the dispensary operation is then to align these elements to facilitate that simplest possible access by those who need it most, when they need it most.

### Direct dispensing

As an example, a common point of discussion with our clients when rethinking their pharmacy design is direct dispensing. If we consider what this work area actually is, we can see that merely accommodating a dispensing PC on a counter won't be effective if it means it's not practical for the pharmacist to work there because, say, stock required is too far removed (behind another counter, for instance). It's likely the interaction with the patient is disjointed, thereby diminishing the value that a seamless direct dispense experience is intended to provide. Furthermore, a dysfunctional work area will result in poor processes and inefficiency, not to mention stressed and frustrated staff.

### CX principle

'Customer centric', 'customer experience', 'customer first' – call it what you like, but all design features should be viewed from the perspective, 'how does this serve my customers better?'. What is good for customers will be good for business. Not only will providing your customers with the very best experience when engaging with your staff in your pharmacy benefit the health of your business, but designing a dispensary and pharmacy with this focus also results in a design that benefits workflow, staff and ultimately your bottom line.

Consider again the example of direct dispensing above. By focusing on creating a space that provides the customer with a seamless and efficient experience, we create a space that is more functional for the staff member and efficient in the overall dispensary operation – ie, direct access to the pharmacist who can then assess their prescription and, if appropriate, dispense it right there in front of them, talk them through any directions, and provide advice.

From a design perspective, we ask – who will primarily use this work area? What will they need here and what will they need access to most frequently? How does this support the best all-round customer experience and flow through the pharmacy? What adjacencies need to be considered?

### Unique environment

Pharmacy is a unique environment that fuses retail design concepts with healthcare, and is also required to meet strict legislative requirements. The successful design of a pharmacy and in particular the dispensary requires in-depth understanding, thought and planning – where the detail in alignment of key resources with key functions determines operational efficiency and effectiveness.

Join us for the next instalments of our Dispensary Corner when we look in detail at designing some of the key work areas within a dispensary.