

PHARMACIUM DISPENSARY CORNER #6



DOSE ADMINISTRATION AIDS: BENEFIT, BURDEN OR AFTERTHOUGHT?

With a few exceptions, the dose administration aid (DAA) aspect of a dispensary operation, and hence, preparation space, is often the least planned area of the dispensary.

It may be that an opportunity to prepare a few community packs for some regulars a few years ago has organically grown over time into a reasonable part of the dispensary workload – without necessarily initially being part of the main strategic plan.

It may be that what was a small cohort of packs for a few regulars packed on a bit of bench space out the back has now overtaken what little available bench space there was (and is threatening to spill into the staff room) after a not-to-be-missed contract opportunity presented itself.

In fact, you may at times look at the stack of patient tubs rivalling an advanced-level game of Jenga, the

pile of checking that someone needs to find time for, and the endless changes and updates, questioning if the chaos occurring in the corner of your dispensary is actually worth it. Sound familiar?

As with any of the key dispensary elements we've discussed throughout the Dispensary Corner series, it all comes down to planning and design. This area of the dispensary can be efficient and contribute value if we reflect again on the principles of our dispensary triangle design theory: ensuring the right resources are in the right place and performing the right function at the right time. In reviewing what makes for an efficient and effective DAA area in the pharmacy, we look at business objectives, position and configuration.

Business objectives

The first thing to consider is where a DAA

service fits into your business strategy. Is this going to be a focal point? What are the opportunities for growth? What type of patients can you pack for, and what type do you *want* to pack for? What systems do you use, and what *can* you use? What costs are involved?

It's fair to say that packing for 180 patients from 180 tubs of medication is not the most efficient approach – on a number of levels. Virtual pill count (VPC) systems, automation and even outsourcing are all viable options that warrant research and, along with the above mentioned points, will impact the design of the DAA workspace.

Position

When considering the best position of the DAA workspace within the context of the dispensary, we need to think about who will work there and what they will need to access. Will the volume of DAAs require a full-time resource or will the

resources work across multiple tasks? Remember to consider packing and checking requirements.

The potential need and ability for staff to work across multiple functional areas of the dispensary is an important consideration in the positioning of the DAA area. If packing internally, where and how will the medications for packing be stored? Will there be a need to access the main stock in the dispensary, and if so, how will this impact on DAA workflow efficiency? Again, depending on volume of DAAs and systems used for packing, this may be of lesser or greater importance.

For most community pharmacies, it will make sense to position the DAA work area close to the main dispensary, to assist with resource flexibility and centralise dispensary stock – i.e., stock for replenishing DAA preparation is retrieved from the main dispensary stock holding.

Think back to our initial dispensary triangle theory: position stock centrally to provide all key work areas easy, uninterrupted access. The importance here is that the position of the DAA area will impact the overall dispensary workflow.

Configuration

Once the position of the DAA work area is

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established, we need to consider the configuration requirements of the workstations. Again here, having clarity around how, what and for whom you are going to pack will influence the design and layout. For example, a seemingly simple but often overlooked detail is appropriate position of power points above the bench for devices where hot-seal packs are prepared – avoiding a potentially treacherous tangle of power cords from hot irons that if tripped on ... well, you get the idea.

Similarly, choice of system will directly impact design. Use of a VPC will have different shelving requirements compared with automated packing, which may require, for example, storage of cannisters in close proximity, and/or space for deblistering devices, and if you outsource your packing, the workspace requirements will be different again.

Careful planning of DAA workstations will mean everything will be stored in the best manner and in the most convenient location. It's the appropriately designed configuration detail that will ensure that the workflow within the DAA work area is efficient.

While additional details, such as storage of completed DAAs, delivery schedules, staff rosters and administrative tasks, need to be considered, the above points serve as a basis for planning an appropriate DAA work area for meeting current needs, as well as providing the option for scalability as required. The objective of the design should be to make DAA preparation more efficient from a space, time and resource perspective and improve the quality of the service you provide your patients.



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