

Disrupting Workflow to Reach the New World of Pharmacy

Rubicon Pharmacies Canada Inc. (rubiconpharmacies.com) owns and operates drug stores in Western Canada. Its chief business development officer, Michael Wright, B.S.P., shared with ComputerTalk's Maggie Lockwood how Rubicon has built a substantial business providing pharmacy services to long-term care and assisted-living facilities, with automation as the necessary component of Rubicon's growth. Going forward, Rubicon's adherence brand Simpl will utilize Synergy Medical's SynMed automation, customized packaging, and central-fill capabilities.

CT: Tell us a little about Rubicon.

Wright: We're a group of 62 locations in Western Canada, with two locations in Alberta, 54 in Saskatchewan, and six in Manitoba. The stores are centrally owned, with the shareholders operating their own locations as managing partners. This structure allows us to focus on big-picture projects like central fill and our Simpl adherence brand rollout. The goal is to provide great care to our patients, understanding that strong financial results will follow. Patients have to understand we truly care before allowing us to become involved in their personal care. Rubicon is owned and operated by pharmacists, and our mantra has become "care equals commerce."

Rubicon recently launched our adherence brand, called Simpl. Our initial plans were to focus on designing more aspirational packaging products for our patients. We quickly realized that "Simpl" had the opportunity to become much more. It has, and is evolving to include all things pharmacy in our 62 locations. Rubicon is committed to doing everything we can to improve adherence and improving medical outcomes.

Disrupting workflow is necessary if we want to separate pharmacists from their traditional distribution roles. Freeing up pharmacists will allow them to expand the volume of professional services we provide to our patients.



SynMed transformed Rubicon Pharmacy into a highly productive operation, says Michael Wright, above.



CT: How has automation, and implementing SynMed systems, contributed to Rubicon's growth?

Wright: Rubicon operates many high-volume retail pharmacies, as well as a smaller number of very large long-term care specialty centers, operating as Rubicon Health Solutions. The long-term care business committed us to explore and roll out packaging automation. Because of all this volume, from the early days we were committed to automation. Our stores were some of the earliest to adopt automation. We now have 16 pieces of automation from four suppliers — vial packagers, multi-dose strip packagers, and more recently, two SynMed blister pack machines. Automation is a very large part of how we handle our large prescription volume. A lot of other pharmacy automation suppliers are focused on selling the consumables used by pharmacies to package prescriptions. A strength of SynMed is the packaging neutrality; Synergy Medical does not sell consumables but rather has adapted its technology for use with almost any blister card on the market.

CT: Tell us about the client preference for blister cards for medication distribution.

Wright: SynMed helped us expand our packaging volume due to its capability to handle a wide variety of blister card products. It is an important piece of our model that we want to offer patients. It is not a one-size-fits-all business. Everyone has

his or her unique tastes, and that fits with our adherence brand, Simpl. With this model, it's more about listening to the patient, what's working for them — and at the end of the day, they pick the packaging. Having variety is very important. Going into the packaging design, we hired a graphic designer to help make the packaging more aspirational. Our goal was to have it speak to efficiency and convenience, not sickness. We haven't forgotten about residential living and long-term care, but this program puts the real focus on retail pharmacy and selling the blister packs as an alternative to traditional vials. Blister packs are proven to boost adherence, and word is getting out.

CT: What are the benefits of technology for the patient?

Wright: Being able to fill a variety of unique packaging allows us to provide options that community pharmacy patients have never been offered, and it's an important piece to us. Within the specifics of the packaging, SynMed prints the medication images on the card, as well as the photo of the resident or pharmacy patient; this has received positive feedback from both patients and their families, as well as caregivers and long-term care administrators. This detail helps with accreditation, helps the caregivers to identify that they are administering the right meds to the right patients — on the institutional side it's a win. In the retail space it's a win, patients want to see what the medication looks like.

In Canada, in particular, the profession is evolving from being focused on distribution without patient interaction to a much more clinical pharmacist approach to things. To do this, you have to go into very busy stores to disrupt the workflow and help the pharmacist find time to do clinical work. That's where the automation comes in. You can have a vial machine in the store, or you can have the adherence packaging from SynMed and have it filled in centralized locations. The finished product is shipped to the pharmacy, and the pharmacists go out to do what they should be doing, which is the clinical work. This model will serve us well now and into the future.

CT: What is SynMed's role on the future growth for Rubicon?

Wright: Simpl is based on the appointment-based pharmacy model, including medication therapy management (MTM). Pharmacy team members will contact patients seven days ahead of their medication running out to check in on their overall health and remind them of their medication pickup day. Pharmacy teams work on the distribution process by forwarding batch files to one of our central-fill sites for preparation. The central-fill site prepares the blister packs or multidose strip packaging and returns them to stores for verification and preparation for pickup.

SynMed is an essential part of our ability to fill customized blister packs, and consequently to gain new patients and new facilities as clients, utilizing this the preferred packaging presentation generated by SynMed.

You can scale with automation. In the old world with manual filling, you hit the wall with the amount you could fill. The demographics are here; with the boomers that are coming into the marketplace, we are getting ready for filling more in the future. This investment is a way to build out capacity so we'll be able to handle the volumes as we grow as an organization, and our existing patient load requires more service from the pharmacist. The team at Synergy Medical are not only selling automation, they also understand how to support us in driving adherence and improving patient outcomes. **CT**

Read more about Synergy Medical's SynMed automation role in central-fill and community pharmacy adherence programs in an interview with Synergy's Trey Tollstam, U.S. director of national accounts, at www.computertalk.com/pharmacyforward-synmed.



✓ **IMPROVE ADHERENCE**

✓ **IMPROVE PATIENT OUTCOMES**

✓ **GENERATE NEW REVENUE**

ONLY HAVE 2.1 MINUTES?

Watch our video to learn how SynMed® can help grow your business.

www.synmedrx.com



Contact us today
 for more information:
info@synmedrx.com
 1 866 764 7966

