

Chain Drug Review

Reporter for the Chain Drug Store Industry

Rite Aid makes Rx more convenient

CAMP HILL, Pa. — Rite Aid Corp. is piloting a ScriptCenter kiosk to make the prescription pickup process more convenient for consumers and to free its pharmacists to interact with patients. The machine, which enables shoppers who enroll in the program to pick up refills after pharmacy hours or during busy periods when they otherwise might have to wait, was installed in a store in Narbeth, Pa., in late August.

"The ScriptCenter gives Rite Aid patients another convenient option to pick up and pay for their prescriptions any time the store is open," says Phil Keough, the drug chain's senior vice president of pharmacy operations. "Our expectation is that this will free up the pharmacy staff to spend more time with patients who need consultation and to assist them with other health care needs."

Linda Pinney, founder and chief business officer of Asteres Inc., the San Diego-based company that makes the kiosks, notes that the ScriptCenter technology helps retailer profitability in many ways.

"Shorter lines and after-hours pickup enhance the shopping experience and build customer loyalty," she says. "Loyal pharmacy customers are loyal shoppers throughout the store, increasing overall market basket size.

"Unlike home delivery, mail order and drive-through, ScriptCenter brings more foot traffic into the store. That builds front-end sales while keeping shoppers closer to



their trusted pharmacist, again increasing sales that otherwise would have been lost altogether."

Finally, Pinney notes that ScriptCenter drives profits as the after-hours pickup option by saving on labor costs associated with keeping the pharmacy open late into the night, especially on weekends.

Keough, who stresses that the pharmacist controls the prescription-filling process whether patients obtain medications the traditional way or utilize kiosks, reports that early indications are that ScriptCenter has struck a chord.

"The initial response has been very positive from both patients and Rite Aid associates," he says. "In Narbeth customers are excited about the convenience ScriptCenter offers, as evidenced by the number of patients who have signed up for the service.

"First and foremost, this is about providing an added

convenience to our customers and continuing to offer solutions that help our patients manage their health care needs."

Rite Aid is the first drug chain in the eastern United States to utilize ScriptCenter. Longs Drug Stores and Safeway Inc. have the kiosks in some of their outlets in California, and Giant Food has units in stores on the East Coast. As regulatory barriers are overcome, kiosks are likely to proliferate at retail.

For community pharmacies, which are confronted with a continuing shortage of professionals and rising script counts, finding new ways to enhance efficiency is a high priority.

"Though ScriptCenter can't fill prescriptions, it can certainly extend pickup hours for retailers' time-pressured customers," says Pinney. "ScriptCenter can also help optimize staffing around low-fill, high-pickup periods."