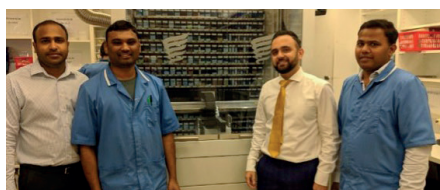


PROMOTION

CHANGING WITH THE TIMES

A change to day-to-day practice can always seem daunting at first – but when the integration of robotic technology results in reduced errors for your pharmacy; increased speed and efficiency for staff; and more personalised services for patients, the investment is more than worth it. WPR speaks to two of the forward-thinking pharmacists who have already taken the leap and experienced the advantages of automation in their settings first-hand.

SANDEEP KHOSLA, MEDIPHARMACY LTD



(L to R) Pharmacist Manager, Nanda Ghanta; Accuracy Checking Dispenser, Pramod Thatikonda; Director of Pharmacy, Sandeep Khosla; and Accuracy Checking Dispenser, Vinod Kumar

WHAT PROBLEMS WERE YOU ENCOUNTERING THAT LED YOU TO LOOK INTO AUTOMATION?

While conducting branch visits across our 20 community pharmacies, and speaking to both our pharmacy managers and pharmacy staff, it was apparent that there was a significant amount of time spent on the preparation of MDS trays for both our community dosette box patients and our care home patients. This impacted on our capacity to provide other services to the community, such as MURs and flu vaccinations. I was aware that the MDS trays that we prepared for our patients was an invaluable service to our communities, allowing them to manage and adhere to complex medication regimens. However, I also realised that we needed to make this process more efficient.

When looking at the various robotic solutions on the market, the most important factors I looked for were ensuring that the system was safe and accurate, as well as being efficient. It was also extremely important that any impact on patients was minimal (i.e. I didn't want to change the type of MDS trays that the patients received).

The Synergy Medical robot has improved efficiency as we currently operate a hub and spoke model across 10 of the pharmacies, with more pharmacies set to integrate into this model. It has also improved patient safety, as there has been a significant reduction in MDS dispensing errors.

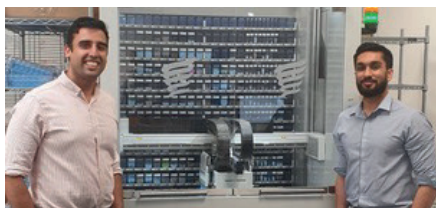
WHAT HAVE BEEN THE BENEFITS OF AUTOMATION?

The most important impact that the hub and spoke operation has had on our business is that it has freed up staff and pharmacist time. In doing so, we now have 20 pharmacies that have all achieved Healthy Living Pharmacy status. All our branches now regularly engage in public health campaigns as well as other health initiatives. Our pharmacies also have more opportunity for regular team meetings, for example, to discuss ideas on achieving company dispensing targets, or to review and discuss near-miss logs to reduce potential dispensing errors. There has been a significant improvement in both advanced and enhanced services.

We are on-course for 18 / 20 branches to complete 400 MURs this year – an improvement on only 11 / 20 branches before the hub and spoke operation. We have also managed to introduce an MUR audit this year, which allows teams to review the quality of the MURs on a quarterly basis. This has only been possible due to the time saved by the robot and the hub and spoke process.

Enhanced services uptake has also significantly improved, such as services like minor ailments, stop smoking and health checks. Staff now have more time to be patient-facing and interact with our customers to make sure that they have the best possible experience in our stores.

JAGDEEP DOSANJH, CLINICAL CARE PHARMACY



Pharmacy Owner, Jag Dosanjh, and Pharmacy Manager, Tarndee Vaid

WHY DID YOU CONSIDER AUTOMATION?

We're a pharmacy that predominantly produces blister packs for both community patients and

care homes. Speed and efficiency were the key things which we were trying to integrate within our team – it was really around our ability to produce the packs which we need to in a manner which is comfortable, and which allows us to carry out our additional services for patients.

WAS THIS A BIG INVESTMENT FOR YOU?

It was the biggest investment which we've ever made. But for our business model, it was absolutely crucial and has literally done everything which we needed it to, without there being any compromises.

HAS AUTOMATION POSITIVELY AFFECTED YOUR TIME SPENT INTERACTING WITH PATIENTS?

We have been able to increase the amount of time we spend directly on patients and on care homes. We've also been able to smooth out a lot of the processes in the pharmacy which has been a huge advantage. Previously it might have felt fraught in that environment; in which we weren't totally confident in our ability to deliver on our promises to our clients. However, the investment means that everything is a lot more structured now.

Additionally, automation has improved our ability to speak to patients and really invest in our staff – we have quite a few members of our team on high level courses now. Having slightly fewer people – but being able to properly invest in them – has been really important.

DO YOU FEEL THAT THE AUTOMATION HAS DELIVERED A RETURN ON INVESTMENT?

Although it has only been in operation for three months, we're anticipating a return on investment as we have increased our numbers. We have also noticed that the amount of time spent in the pharmacy doing the extra hours has reduced, resulting in a better work-life balance, and a greater opportunity to take on more business with confidence.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A PHARMACIST CONSIDERING AUTOMATION?

It is one of the best ways forward to improve and innovate. I would say that if a pharmacist is thinking about automation, they should spend proper time considering it – don't take the decision lightly. But once you do put things in place, the investment will ultimately free up your ability to focus on other sides of the business that you want to try to develop.

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- Recalibrates containers for new generics on site in 5 minutes
- Compatible with most U.K. Blister Packs

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