

# Hospital Ambulatory Pharmacy Service Program Advances Clinical Outcomes and Grows Revenue

The Valley  Health System

## CHALLENGE

Hospital managers sought to increase revenue by leveraging outpatient pharmacy infrastructure to capture off-campus ambulatory scripts.

## SOLUTION

Decision makers hired AmerisourceBergen's Pharmacy Healthcare Solutions consultants to develop, implement and build an ambulatory services practice.

## OUTCOME

- Consistently fills, and same-day delivers, meds directly to health facility residents to promote their adherence, self-sufficiency and well-being
- Summerlin's CentRx pharmacy program enlisted 60 recurring scripts, with more residents signing up by the month
- Pharmacy program's success earned word-of-mouth referrals and continues building hospital pharmacy's brand
- Developed and implemented turnkey ambulatory pharmacy services template to serve senior facility residents across southern Nevada



## Summerlin Hospital

Southern Nevada's Valley Health System serves more than two million people. Its network spans six acute care hospitals, including the 454-bed Summerlin Hospital. Summerlin Hospital's CentRx pharmacy serves the needs of in- and out-patient populations. These include system hospital patients and employees along with a growing number of outpatient customers.

## CHALLENGE

### *Shrinking margins and reimbursements prompt search for revenue opportunities*

The Summerlin pharmacy had reached market saturation for its hospital patients, having earned the overwhelming majority of them as customers. Based on that success, managers decided to grow revenue beyond the hospital's walls.

Summerlin elected to develop a retail pharmacy practice; however, setting up, running and growing such an operation is much different than that of a hospital pharmacy. Specifically, it requires a "retail-centric" approach, complete with outreach and marketing programs. To close the entrepreneurial knowledge gap and to ensure a successful program rollout, managers vetted and hired AmerisourceBergen's Pharmacy Healthcare Solutions (PHS) consultants.

*"By using best practices to develop and implement Summerlin's ambulatory pharmacy program, our patients enjoy better clinical outcomes. We also have a proven business model to add to the pharmacy's bottom line."*

Julie Hamilton, PharmD, MBA  
Director of Pharmacy  
Summerlin Hospital

“They chose us because we demonstrated that we could kick-start a successful retail pharmacy practice,” recalls Julie Hamilton, now serving as Director of Pharmacy for the CentRx pharmacy at Summerlin Hospital.

Though the retail pharmacy rollout was successful, in time, script volume began to level off. In an effort to further grow the network’s customer base, executives implemented an additional ambulatory pharmacy program.

## SOLUTION

### ***AmerisourceBergen’s Ambulatory Pharmacy Solution***

Based on the successful retail pharmacy engagement, Summerlin managers chose to hire an AmerisourceBergen Pharmacy Healthcare Solutions consultant to run and grow the new ambulatory practice. “They could have hired their own team,” says Hamilton, “but a top priority was to develop, implement and grow an outreach ambulatory program to bring in revenue beyond the hospital’s walls. And I demonstrated the expertise and experience to quickly implement that plan.”



While developing her program, Hamilton met with Darcy Tumminello to discuss the Las Ventanas Retirement Community’s challenges in Las Vegas. Says the registered nurse and Wellness Director for the Community, “Our independent living facility residents weren’t getting their meds consistently, which led to problems.”

Research shows “Not filling or refilling prescriptions is a common cause for medication nonadherence in older adults.”<sup>1</sup> In turn, nonadherence can lead to loss of independence, including placement in a nursing home.<sup>2</sup>

Hamilton considered Tumminello’s challenges, and created a program based on PHS ambulatory pharmacy best practices. Her goals were to deliver meds consistently and economically, provide clinical counseling and to cultivate long-term relationships with residents. The relationship-building process included educating prospective customers, so Hamilton created and printed senior-friendly welcome packets. These detailed the program, its benefits and included an easy-to-complete, one-page enrollment application.

At the operational level, the CentRx pharmacy delivers meds Monday through Friday. Residents submit prescriptions to an onsite lockbox, where they are retrieved at 11:00 a.m. and filled/delivered by 2:00 p.m. on the same day.

Hamilton’s pharmacy technician personally delivers meds to residents’ doors. This allows him to answer questions and to strengthen the pharmacy’s relationships with customers. He also identifies potential issues, such as side effects or adverse events, and reports them to Hamilton to be addressed.

Summerlin’s CentRx pharmacy is enrolled in AmerisourceBergen’s Good Neighbor Pharmacy (GNP) program as well. “This helps us to economically offer a full range of prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) meds,” says Hamilton.

## OUTCOME

### ***Healthier, happier living facility residents grow pharmacy revenue***

#### **Benefits to senior care facility residents**

Previously, Tumminello’s independent living residents experienced interruptions in med fills/refills. Today, Hamilton’s CentRx pharmacy ensures fulfillment and consistent same-day delivery of meds. “We have definitely seen an increase in adherence,” says Tumminello. “And I have noticed a general upsurge in happiness among residents who now follow their medication regimen.”

Customer satisfaction surveys confirm this. Since implementing the CentRx pharmacy program, satisfaction scores have increase by 30 percent among residents and their families alike.<sup>3</sup> Hamilton’s brownbag review of new program enlistees partly accounts for the increase.

"She's been very effective in identifying redundant, and no-longer-needed meds to consolidate drug therapies for our residents," says Tumminello. "From a cost and treatment perspective, the fewer prescriptions the better."

Hamilton's CentRx pharmacy program also promotes residents' independence to help them maintain their dignity. "The thing our residents like most is that they can fill and manage their medications on their own, without being a burden to their families," explains Tumminello. "Family members say this helps them make the most of the time they spend with our residents, versus running errands filling prescriptions, or worrying over med issues like they did before."

The CentRx pharmacy program has also improved the physical safety of residents. "Previously, residents jaywalked across a very busy eight-lane street to fill prescriptions," recalls Tumminello. "The pharmacy's to-the-door delivery service eliminates that danger for users and lowers stress."

Hamilton's program also offers convenient, single point-of-contact simplicity to make the lives of nurses and physicians easier. "If there's ever an issue, all I have to do is call Julie and she fixes it," says Tumminello. "Knowing that she'll handle it the first time, without any hand-holding from me, is fantastic because I don't have the time."

The CentRx pharmacy program has also made the Las Ventanas Retirement Community more competitive in its space. "Residents are quite happy with the program and often remark that other communities they've lived in simply don't have this level of service."

### Benefits to Summerlin Hospital pharmacy

"The CentRx program delivers a consistent and growing revenue source to help our bottom line," explains Hamilton. "And the Good Neighbor Pharmacy (GNP) program pricing allows us to be more competitive."

Moreover, GNP's offering is comprehensive, providing both OTC and pharmaceutical meds. "Having a single source for all their needs is very important to our senior customers," adds Hamilton.

The program is catching on. "As the word gets around, I've noticed an increase in the resident adoption rate," she says.

Buoyed by its success, Hamilton is now marketing her program to other senior living facilities. "By proving ourselves with Las Ventanas' independent living residents, we're positioned to compete strongly for their assisted living resident business. And we've successfully established a turnkey program that we're marketing to like facilities as well."



### References

1. Marek KD, Antle L., "Medication Management of the Community-Dwelling Older Adult." In: Hughes RG, editor. Patient Safety and Quality: An Evidence-Based Handbook for Nurses. Rockville (MD): Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (US); 2008 Apr. Chapter 18.
2. Lewis A. Non-compliance: a \$100 billion problem. The Remington Report. 1997;5(4):14-5.
3. Note that the survey "bundled" all in-house services that the Las Ventanas Retirement Community now offers including: pharmacy, radiology, lab work and hearing. That said, resident feedback from the pharmacy program users has been "very positive," according to Tumminello.

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