



Community Pharmacy 2025

Framework for Change

Growth pathway: Automation



The Pharmacy
Guild of Australia

www.guild.org.au/cp2025



Automation

What is the pathway?

Introduce automation to reduce manual processes and focus staff on patient care activities, including:

- Automated dispensing and medicines packing systems
- Other solutions that reduce the time and cost of administrative tasks and improve service levels (e.g. stock ordering and pricing, bookings and payments, payroll, self-service purchasing pods)
- Remote health monitoring, and health advice and reminders using smart phone apps

Why make the change?

Automation can deliver efficiencies in administrative processes, including medicines picking and packing, point of sale, marketing, patient monitoring and advice, back office activities such as supply chain and inventory management, and human resource management. This frees up staff time which can be used to deliver services and improve customer care, generating new revenue streams and improving personal relationships with patients.

The opportunity for pharmacies

Early adoption of the right technologies can improve profitability. Options range from large investments such as automated dispensing machines which may only be viable in larger pharmacies to relatively low cost solutions, including platforms that automate supply chain decisions, patient communications and back office activities.

Substantial financial investment may be required. However, these technologies are already present in some pharmacies, so information is available on their impact. An additional benefit is that many of these solutions enable measurement of business performance. With funders focused on cost effectiveness, automation can deliver a competitive advantage over less technologically advanced health providers. It can also demonstrate your personalised approach to patient care, including through virtual monitoring and online patient advice.

What happens if I don't make the change?

Automation in the broader services sector is accelerating regardless of the progress in any particular segment of the health system. If pharmacies do not extract efficiencies from automating administrative tasks, they are more susceptible to labour and other cost increases and at a competitive disadvantage to businesses that have already embedded these solutions. They are also less able to demonstrate value to patients, partners and funders.

You are not alone – champion story

John Kardis – Advantage Pharmacy, Melbourne, VIC

John thinks that one of the biggest challenges in running a successful and efficient pharmacy business lies in the way inventory is managed. The Advantage Pharmacy group has centralised and automated their ordering through a single platform. Thirty-three stores run on the platform, which automatically suggests purchases of prescription and over-the-counter medicines and retail items as needed, keeping the inventory streamlined and manageable. John constantly evaluates processes and tasks for potential automation opportunities. Stock is managed on demand rather than filling shelves and hoping it is sold. John does not drown the store in stock.

“Automation can save the pharmacy a substantial amount of time – administrative tasks such as purchasing, invoicing and inventory management are no longer consuming valuable time that staff can use to focus on better patient outcomes.”



Pathway change plan



Market research

Whilst not as widely supported as other pathways, a majority of patients support automation in pharmacies. A significant portion of patients (33 per cent) were strongly opposed to charging for automation. The solutions that are most attractive to patients are automatic notifications about the availability of a script for collection, followed by health monitoring and advice via smartphone apps.

Quick wins

Calculate the time spent doing repetitive tasks that are not patient focused and look at examples of pharmacies that have used automation to reduce this burden.

What can I do now?

- Calculate the time spent by staff doing repetitive tasks and seek their input into possible efficiencies
- Talk to other pharmacy owners who have automated various administrative processes
- Undertake some initial planning. Establish a budget. Talk to your team and ensure they are aware of your plans to use automation to enhance the overall efficiency of your pharmacy and are trained in the new systems
- Consider the benefits of investing in automated dispensing and/or medicines packing
- Undertake due diligence on software to optimise stock management including ordering, stock turns and pricing
- Investigate in-store self-service pods. Consider using tablets to have patient information at your finger tips
- Assess software solutions that analyse de-identified patient data to identify services opportunities
- Consider software and applications to automate communication to loyalty program members
- Consider automated repeat reminders and script pick-up notifications
- Consider opportunities to automate payroll and human resource systems
- Re-allocate administrative resources freed up by automation to patient care activities

Who do I talk to?

Talk to your staff about undertaking an audit of the most repetitive administrative tasks in your pharmacy and how they think automation could be used to create efficiencies and improve patient care.

Scripts in



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