



Pharmacy 1-2-3

Supporting the future of Pharmacy



A fast-evolving landscape...

How can Community Pharmacies prepare for transformation?

Across the UK we are witnessing an evolution in NHS contracts to meet the changing needs of health systems and patients, initiating a transformation of the community pharmacy business model. This includes amended funding streams which shift the emphasis and money away from dispensing into new clinical services.

The coronavirus pandemic has also accelerated digital and technological innovation with subsequent changes in consumer behaviours. Expectations of the NHS have also changed with plans to further integrate community pharmacy into out-of-hospital care.

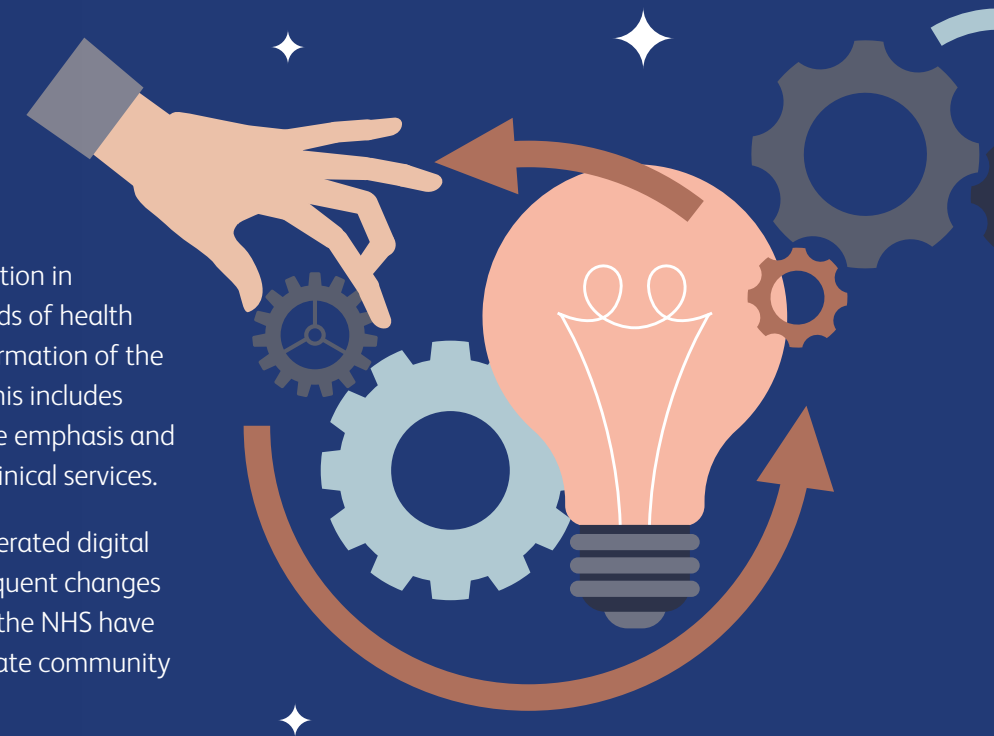
Legislation is now in place, which should soon enable Hub&Spoke prescription assembly between different business entities. Pharmacy owners must consider whether this is an opportunity for them or could be a threat from their competition.

"The changes – which would apply throughout the UK – would mean that the hub and spoke model, which is currently only available to individual businesses and is largely used by chain pharmacies, would be open to independents, for example by 'grouping together' to split the cost of setting up a hub."

The enablers

Once you have a plan of where you want to be, enabling technologies that drive efficiency, such as Pharmacy IT Systems (PMR) and electronic prescriptions, come into their own with some community pharmacies taking advantage of automation. Uptake of automated dispensing is gathering momentum in the UK and has the potential to free up the space, time and resources needed to deliver clinical services and grow the business more effectively.

With automation, a pharmacy's stockholding is reduced, availability improved, expiry dates managed automatically and picking errors eliminated thus positively impacting of patient safety and experience.



A highly organised, automated stock room makes the best use of available floor space by storing packs far more densely than normal shelving, hence freeing not only capacity but also room to devote to other services.

Automation is a very flexible option with systems on the market to suit all sizes of operation.

James Martin, Pharmacy Manager at Chapel Pharmacy commented when speaking on the advantages of automation: "One of the biggest things I've noticed coming from a non-automated pharmacy is the calmness the robot brings and because we don't have to rush about putting things away it saves a lot of time for both Pharmacists and Technicians. In my previous pharmacy we used to have stock that went out of date, whereas here with the robot we can print a report and it tells us what lines are going out of date and when. It is a really useful feature because you can flag those lines, find who need them and if they are going to use them you can put the medications to one side."

Many pharmacies are also embracing digital screens both inside and in windows to communicate health messages and in window displays promote what services they do and products they sell.

Improved accuracy, safety, and efficiency

Janice Perkins is ex Pharmacy Superintendent at Well and Chair of the Community Pharmacy Patient Safety Group (PSG). She says that not all PSG members are using automation, but those who do are “unanimous in the benefits with regard to patient safety”. Nonetheless, she says: “Using automation should not mean that team members can reduce their concentration or compliance to the agreed processes. Patient safety incidents do still happen with automation and when investigated are nearly always linked to human intervention.”

PMR systems are also rising to the challenge with some becoming a dispensary management system to reduce dependency on paper prescriptions, increase accuracy with ScanCheck barcode technology to track and check, and utilise the powerful data therein to inform business decisions.

With new business processes or ways of working, such as Hub & Spoke, comes new challenges which need to be overcome - funding model and business case, data ownership and management, clinical accountability, patient experience and service level, and trust when collaborating with historical and potential competitors.

For example, pharmacy chains already implementing Hub & Spoke have solved the issue of clinical responsibility and confidence by packing the dispensed medication in sealed, recyclable bags with transparent windows for easy verification by the pharmacist before

passing on to the patient, whilst maintaining patient confidentiality.

It is difficult to generalise the business case for automation. The objective is to free up space and resources to deliver clinical services which, in turn, will drive profitable growth. “The Government claims the changes will have numerous benefits for pharmacies, patients and the NHS. It says the changes will free up time for spoke pharmacies, allowing pharmacists to focus more on clinical services and face-to-face patient care.

It is also claimed that the use of automation by hub pharmacies will make dispensing more efficient, and could drive down the number of dispensing errors, which “are already very rare”.¹

Stock investment is also reduced releasing capital to support cash-flow and investment. These factors vary from pharmacy to pharmacy and group to group therefore it is important to carefully consider the financial implications and benefits, as part of a comprehensive business plan.



Paul Mayberry,
Mayberry Pharmacy

Centralised dispensing allowed me to reduce the stock holding by half and to lower the costs per prescription by over 25 % for the whole group. My pharmacists now focus on what they truly wanted to do when they entered the pharmacy profession: spending time with patients to provide the best advice.



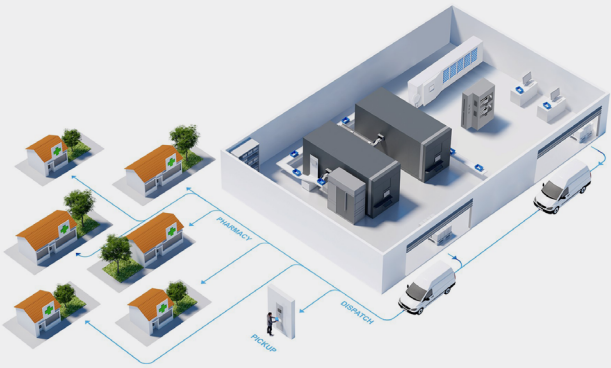
BD Rowa 1-2-3

One size doesn't fit all!

Automation comes in many guises and is flexible enough to offer a solution for any size and type of business. The single pharmacy can benefit from its own automated storage and assembly, whereas the groups and co-operatives can take advantage of the Hub & Spoke approach – with the Hub in the biggest branch or even located remotely. Third party fulfilment services may be the way to go for some pharmacies.

“ Every pharmacy can benefit – just choose the right option and it could transform your business. ”

Level 3:
Hub Facility –
Hub & Spoke robots



Level 2:
Hybrid Pharmacy –
In-store + Hub & Spoke robot



Level 1:
Retail Pharmacy –
In-store robot



Taking it to the next level

The Hub & Spoke concept takes automation to the next level by assembling prescriptions in a central location (hub) and distributing to a collection of pharmacies (spokes). Although suitable for anything from two pharmacies upwards, it has so far mainly been adopted in the UK by the vertically integrated multiples and a few leading regional groups. Hub & Spoke is well established in Northern Europe, particularly in Denmark where 70% of community pharmacies use it; and the Netherlands where it is used by most multiples and around a third of independents. 34% of prescriptions in the USA are assembled centrally.³

Regional multiple, H.I. Weldrick owns 59 community pharmacies throughout South Yorkshire, several of which have automated dispensing. The company also has a centralised assembly hub which manages most of its repeat dispensing.

On a larger scale, Phoenix, owners of both Rowlands Pharmacy and Numark, began proof of concept testing for industrial scale pouch dispensing at its NuPAC Hub and Spoke facility in 2017. This incorporates Rowa Dose, BD Rowa's dose pouching technology for producing patient-specific medication regimes as an alternative to the MDS traditionally assembled in community pharmacy.²

Nicky Grundy, Numark Consulting, says patient safety was critical right from the start. "Quality control and patient safety are at the heart of the operation, with production conducted in a clean clinical environment," she says. "Specifically within pouching, where we assemble at tablet level, there is rigorous quality assessment measuring throughout the operation, from the point of deb blistering medication..."

The long-awaited legislation (Medicines and Medical Devices Act 2021) includes scope to allow Hub & Spoke arrangements between different legal entities following

consultation. This potentially opens the door to several opportunities. Groups of any size with the same legal entity can already set up 'intra-company' Hub & Spoke operation. However, new rules around Hub & Spoke currently in consultation phase, allow different legal entities to work together so a group of independent pharmacies could operate a mutually beneficial co-operative 'inter-company' hub.

Managing director Joe Cattee recently stated that "centralising the process will free up local pharmacists and Peak Pharmacy staff to provide other services for patients, such as vaccinations, blood pressure checks and healthy living advice," the chain said.

On making the facility available to other pharmacies outside of its own business, Peak Pharmacy said it "is planning to be in a position to offer a centralised dispensing service to other independent pharmacies which don't have the resources to develop their own centralised service, should the legislation allowing this change in the near future."⁴

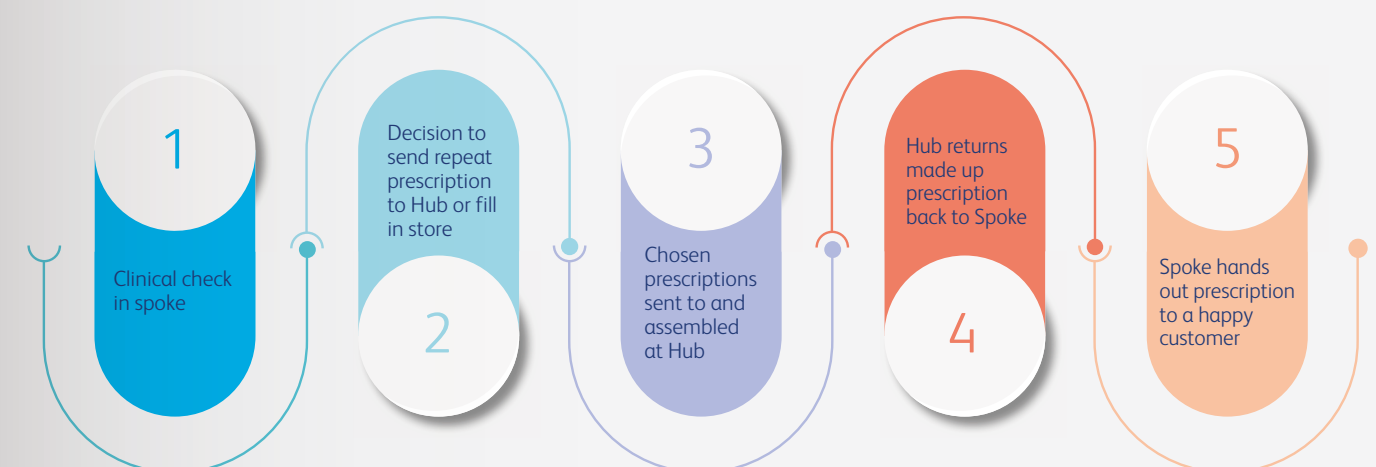
In addition, there is huge potential for third party procurement and fulfilment services. For some businesses, the most appropriate option may well be to outsource prescription assembly to a larger operation.

Technology allows pharmacists to remove themselves from dispensing and have more of an overview of the business and it provides an opportunity to use their clinical skills.

David Vanns, Director of Operations, H.I. Weldrick

Once automated prescription assembly reaches a certain size, the hub could be moved to offsite premises.

It is important to find the balance which frees up the right amount of capacity to support the level of new services. In addition, all pharmacies using a remote Hub need to keep some medication in-pharmacy to fulfil walk-in patients with chronic and acute prescriptions. The optimum 'sweet spot' seems to lie at keeping around half of all prescriptions in store and half in the Hub.



References:

¹ Pharmacy Magazine: <https://www.p3pharmacy.co.uk/news/825878-government-launches-new-consultation-on-hub-and-spoke-proposals>

² Pharmacy Magazine: <https://www.p3pharmacy.co.uk/insight/a-safe-pair-of-hands>

³ National Pharmacy Association Hub & Spoke Research Review <https://www.npa.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Hub-and-Spoke-research-review-NPA-published-February-2020.pdf>

⁴ Pharmacy Magazine: <https://www.p3pharmacy.co.uk/news/855373-peak-pharmacy-invests-20m-to-create-hub-and-spoke-facility>

Becton Dickinson Dispensing UK Ltd, 1030 Eskdale Road, Winnersh Triangle,
Wokingham, Berkshire RG41 5TS, UK, Tel. +44 800 917 8776, Email: rowa-uk@bd.com

bd.com

BD, the BD Logo and BD Rowa are trademarks of Becton, Dickinson and Company or its affiliates.
©2024 BD. All rights reserved. Jun-2024, BD-109772

