



## Aultman's Pharmacy Team Provides Comprehensive Services

Many people think there is just one pharmacist at Aultman Hospital. Others think there aren't any. Steve Armatas, director of pharmacy operations, and Jim Toohy, director of pharmacy systems at Aultman, have heard it all. "I even had someone tell me they thought we got all of our drugs from the pharmacy across the street!" Toohy said.

Little did they know that Aultman Hospital actually employs 35 pharmacists along with more than 50 pharmacy techs and support staff members. The pharmacy team at Aultman touches just about every department at the hospital, ensuring that all patients at Aultman receive the appropriate medications in the proper dosages and in the safest way possible. And, they don't just work in the pharmacy up on the third floor of the Bedford building. Pharmacists actually join physicians while they round on patients at the hospital to make medication recommendations and ensure safety. They are part of several multidisciplinary teams in clinical departments all over the hospital.

Aultman pharmacists also take part in research studies to stay on the cutting edge of pharmacy technology. Currently, they are participating in more than 100 different drug studies. This is important as we move into the future, and it keeps Aultman on the forefront of new innovations in medicine. Another way Aultman stays current is through its relationships with Ohio colleges of pharmacy. Aultman works with students from Ohio State University, Ohio Northern University, University of Toledo and the Northeast Ohio Medical University, or NEOMED. Aultman helps pharmacy students develop the professional, practical and clinical skills needed to become successful pharmacists and gain exposure to all aspects of the profession.



NEOMED has been working with Aultman since 2008 and as a result, it has the strongest presence at the hospital. To date, 41 pharmacy students from NEOMED have been through the program at Aultman. The affiliation between Aultman and NEOMED gives pharmacy students the ability to cultivate skills such as critical thinking, communication and leadership as well as participate in Aultman-sponsored community outreach health programs and direct patient care activities. Further strengthening the relationship is the fact that two of Aultman's pharmacists serve as faculty members at NEOMED.

In addition to working at the hospital, teaching and doing research, Aultman pharmacists also provide home health care services. "Even though patients have been released and are back at home, they are often still in need of continued care," said Ken Sander, who directs the Aultman Infusion Services pharmacy. This is where the home infusion team comes into play. Home infusion provides IV therapy to patients in the comfort of their own home. The team works with nurses, dietitians and physicians to create "at-home" care plans for patients. "We feel that the team approach translates to better patient care," Sander continued. The home infusion team can provide nutritional support, pain management, hydration therapy, chemotherapy and antibiotic therapy. In addition, they are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, covering Stark, Wayne, Tuscarawas, Holmes and Carroll Counties.

## AULTMAN EMPLOYEE PHARMACY



■ The Aultman Employee Pharmacy staff includes (L-R): Tom Casey, RPh; Missy Stefanko, CPhT; Georgia Carter, CPhT; Dan Muskoff, RPh; Lee Ann Smith, CPhT; Angie Kompapa, CPhT and Mary Jo Taylor, CPhT (Not Pictured is Jenny Weisburn, RPh).

### Many patients and visitors don't even know it exists.

However, the Aultman Employee Pharmacy is located in the main lobby of Aultman Hospital, right next to the flower shop. Another thing most people don't know is that the pharmacy is not exclusively for employees. Dependents of employees, ER patients and discharged patients are welcome to use the pharmacy to fill prescriptions.

According to Pharmacist Tom Casey, many patients don't know about the pharmacy. "It was created mainly for use by employees, volunteers and their families," he said. "However, we are also here to provide convenient pharmacy

services for our discharged and same-day surgery patients."

Casey clarified that prescription medications are the only products limited to patients, employees and volunteers. Everything else the pharmacy sells, including durable medical equipment, is available to anyone who walks through the door. The employee pharmacy offers a complete line of over-the-counter medications, supplements, vitamins and minerals, supplies and more. Next time you are at the hospital, stop by and look around; you will find everything from tissues to toothpaste; contact solution to cough drops. The employee pharmacy provides

everything you can find in your local drug store or maybe even more!

The large selection and the well-situated location make the employee pharmacy an extremely convenient stop for patients, employees and visitors. The pharmacy is open Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. and Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

The average elderly person takes more than 4 prescription drugs at once, plus 2 over-the-counter drugs?

## How to Save Money on Your Prescriptions



### The cost of prescription medications in the United States is on the rise.

In fact, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, the projected annual expenditure on prescriptions for 2011 is more than \$258 billion. You can avoid these rising costs by taking a more active role in your health, both physically and financially.

The first place to start is at your doctor's office. When discussing potential medications with your physician, don't be afraid to share your financial concerns. Ask your doctor why you need the medication, if there are generic alternatives available and if a 90-day supply is an option. You can also ask your doctor about pill splitting, which can cut your monthly prescription costs in half. It is important to keep in mind, though, that certain medications cannot be split, so be sure to check with your doctor or pharmacist before doing so.

Your local pharmacy is another place where you can save money. If

you haven't already, ask about generics, which are essentially the exact same medications, at a fraction of the price. Most pharmacies have generic lists of drugs that range between \$4 and \$10. It is important to remember that generics, like brand-name drugs, are approved by the FDA and meet the same standards for quality. The reason behind generic drugs is simply to help keep drug costs down by allowing for competition in the industry. Generic drugs are certainly doing their job, as they are saving consumers between \$8 billion and 10 billion each year.

Aside from requesting generics, another way to save at the pharmacy is by using store-based discount prescription cards. Many of our local pharmacies, including Walgreens, CVS and Rite Aid, offer these cards or similar discount programs. Check with your local pharmacist to find out

more. If you are using a pharmacy that does not offer discount cards, consider looking for another convenient pharmacy.

Insurance companies can be the most important source for cost savings. Before signing up for a plan, do some research. Check out the drug formulary, compare costs of the medications you are currently taking, and check out the yearly maximums and deductibles. Ask about mail order pharmacies and the potential cost savings through getting 60- or 90-day supplies rather than only 30.

In addition to these simple cost-saving measures, there are prescription assistance programs, discount cards and coupons available through many drug companies. To find out more, visit the website of the drug you are taking or simply ask your pharmacist or doctor for more information.

## BRAND VS. GENERIC - What's the difference?

Whether it is brand-name or generic, you expect your medication to be safe, effective, affordable and available. Therefore, it is good to know that the FDA approves both brand-names and generics, ensuring both meet the same FDA standards for quality. In fact, the FDA assures that generic drugs are safe, effective and affordable alternatives for brand-name drugs that can be used with complete confidence.



Generic drugs are simply copies of brand-name medications with the same quality, the same strength and the same safety. The difference lies in the supplier of the drug. Brand-name drugs are supplied by only one drug company and are sold under that drug company's trademarked name. Generic drugs are supplied by more than one company and may be sold under active ingredient names. Again, it is important to remember that both types of drugs are approved by the FDA for the same standards and quality.

It is essential to have both brand and generic drugs available, as the generic competition helps keep drug costs down. In addition, the competition encourages research and keeps insurance premiums down. Annually, generic drugs save consumers between \$8 billion and \$10 billion. Therefore, it is no surprise that they are gaining in popularity. In fact, the FDA reports that seven out of every 10 prescriptions filled in the United States are for generic drugs. Research shows that generics work just as well as brand-name drugs. More importantly, the cost of a generic is 80-85 percent lower than the brand-name product. If you are not already taking generic drugs, you may want to consider the switch. For more information on generic and brand-name drugs, please visit the FDA website at [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov).



## PRESCRIPTION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS OFFERED TO STARK RESIDENTS



Just last year, Aultman employees helped hospital patients save more than \$1 million on their prescriptions. Staff at the Aultman Physician Center, Aultman Cancer Center and members of Aultman's Case Management team work diligently with Aultman's Financial Assistance Program and other drug manufacturer assistance programs to help save patients money. Here in our community, there is an assistance program called the Prescription Assistance Network of Stark County. This program enrolls participants into Patient Assist Programs (PAPs), which provide prescription medication at minimal cost or free of charge. The program also enrolls participants into Medicare D plans. PAPs were developed by American pharmaceutical companies to assist low-income, uninsured individuals with access to the prescription medications they need. Each company has its own criteria for eligibility, and the Prescription Assistance Network of Stark County helps individuals research, assess and enroll in the proper programs. In addition, the Prescription Assistance Network of Stark County purchases emergency medications for Stark residents. To find out more, visit [www.starkrxnetwork.com](http://www.starkrxnetwork.com). The state of Ohio also offers prescription assistance in the form of a discount card program called Ohio's "Best Rx." This program is designed to lower the cost of prescriptions for Ohio residents without prescription drug coverage. In order to qualify for the "Best Rx" discount card, individuals must be over the age of 60 or have an annual family income of less than 300 percent of the federal poverty level. For more details, visit <http://ohiobestrx.com>.

### More Prescription Assistance Programs:

Partnership for Prescription Assistance  
<http://www.pparx.org>

RxAssist  
<http://rxassist.org/>

Needy Meds  
<http://www.needymeds.org/>

\*This is not a complete list. Visit the website of the company that produces your medication to find out if assistance programs are available.

## AULTMAN: HOME TO THE PHARMACY OF THE FUTURE



■ Inside the "clean room" in the Aultman Pharmacy, where IV medications are mixed and dispensed.

### Two years ago, the inpatient pharmacy at Aultman Hospital moved to the third floor of the Bedford building.

Not only did this allow for a more effective workspace, but it also allowed room for a state-of-the-art, automated inpatient pharmacy system. Aultman actually became one of the first in the country at the time, to operate such a system. The primary goal of the automated system, of course, was patient safety and the elimination of errors. This goal continues to be achieved each and every day in the Aultman inpatient pharmacy. The automated technology enforces accuracy through a bar code system, which ensures patient safety. From the time a medication order is received in the pharmacy until the medicine actually winds up at the patient's bedside, the same code remains on the drug. Multiple scans of that code have taken place during the process as well, with the final scan being on the patient's wristband before administration of the drug. "We force safety," said Steve Armatas, director of pharmacy operations. "And the new technology we have allows us to do so." Instead of being left to the discretion of humans, safety is now the responsibility of the technology. The system can enforce necessary corrections, remind pharmacy staff of significant details and provide alerts of possible interactions or problems. The technology is essentially able to provide complete accuracy. The entire pharmacy system is actually an integrated structure comprised of six different components.



The first, MedComm-Rx, is an order communication system that uses electronic imaging for orders instead of traditional faxing. This process minimizes errors, eliminates lost or duplicate orders and provides electronic storage. The Medication Carousel replaced 1,800 square feet of shelving and the software provides "just in time" inventory control by calculating optimal medication supply, projecting when levels are at risk and even re-ordering drugs as needed. The High Speed Packager is another piece of the system and

dispensed for the right patient. AcuDose software allows for the scanning of manufacturer bar codes to verify medications for storage and dispense. And, the final component is the "clean room," a completely sterile environment for mixing and dispensing IV medications. The room features touchless sinks and hand dryers, uses filtered air and contains a video surveillance system for constant monitoring capabilities. Aultman's pharmacy system is truly a "Pharmacy of the Future." Two years after its introduction, it

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— STEVE ARMATAS

is used to stock medications on nursing units. It can accommodate up to 400 different medications and produces packages in multiple sizes. ROBOT-Rx is the pharmacy robotics system, which can actually run unattended. It basically assures the right medication is being

continues to provide the highest levels of patient safety, accuracy and quality. Patients and their families can feel confident in the Aultman inpatient pharmacy, knowing they are receiving the best and safest care possible.



■ Pharmacist Dan Muskoff, hard at work in the Aultman Employee Pharmacy.

## The Pharmacy Profession: Taking On A New Role

The career of the pharmacist is changing. The traditional role of dispensing medicine has moved to a more clinically based role involving comprehensive medical management. Sure, pharmacists still dispense drugs, but they are now being recognized and respected for their role when it comes to patient care. Physicians and patients alike count on pharmacists to be a crucial source of knowledge. They count on pharmacists to provide advice, prevent potential medication issues, improve drug therapy compliance and simply assist with patient care.

This recognition of the value of pharmacists is expanding nationwide. In fact, pharmacists now have provider status. With health care reform coming, they will continue their growth as a vital component in patient care. As we move into the future, we will see an increase in the multidisciplinary approach to medicine. Physicians and other clinicians will depend on

pharmacists to help them improve best practices, reduce readmissions and overall, provide better care.

To prepare for the future of health care, pharmacy schools are now increasing standards and enhancing the curriculums for students. Rather than learning from textbooks, students today are doing much more face-to-face learning and gaining knowledge through experience. This better prepares students for their future careers, where they will spend most of their time dealing with patients. Pharmacists' education however, continues long after graduation and into the duration of their careers. Due to the ever-changing health care industry and the countless new medications being introduced each year, pharmacists must continue learning throughout their entire career.

Students considering a career in pharmacy need to make sure they enjoy studying. They must be willing to seek out opportunities to learn beyond the classroom. Of

course, the classroom is where the education for a pharmacist starts. After two years of pre-pharmacy courses like biology, chemistry and calculus, students must complete four years of a professional program, which leads to a Doctor of Pharmacy degree, or a Pharm. D. Once a doctorate is received from an accredited college of pharmacy, students must go through a supervised internship, and then successfully complete a series of exams administered by the state board of pharmacy to become certified.

Once a pharmacist is certified, the opportunities are endless. One can become a community pharmacist, a consulting pharmacist; work in a hospital or other institutional setting; work at an academic pharmacy or even work for the pharmaceutical industry. No matter where they go, pharmacists today are enjoying the recognition and appreciation they deserve.

# AULTMAN



See the Aultman Pharmacy's innovative technology at work!