

5 trends

reshaping the role of
pharmacies across
health services





With an increased focus on health and wellbeing, and new-found awareness of the importance and complexities of vaccination programs, there are growing opportunity for pharmacies to define themselves as **central players in the new health economy**. For years, consumers have been trusting their neighborhood pharmacy for a range of services: picking up prescriptions, buying vitamins, and getting high-quality retail items like nappies and makeup. Increasingly, people are also happy to rely on pharmacies for advice and medical services, from blood pressure monitoring, to cholesterol check-ups, to strep tests, to vaccinations.

As pharmacies become service providers and expand their product ranges to more retail items, consumers expect them to offer the same quality and range of experiences retailers are offering: across channels, at all times, with additional conveniences such as longer hours of operation and product expertise.

Here are **five key trends reshaping the future of pharmacies** and transforming them into personalized healthcare hubs:

- 1 -** Making basic medical services more readily available
- 2 -** Supporting the local community's health and wellness
- 3 -** Offering more personalization and convenience
- 4 -** Improving medical adherence
- 5 -** Optimizing the supply chain

1 Making basic medical services more readily available

Pharmacists are consistently named among the most **trusted professionals** in the health industry by consumers. With years of education and training as well as a lifelong commitment to continuous professional development, these highly trained professionals are experts in medicine and capable of helping patients with a whole host of minor health concerns.

With this in mind, pharmacies are well positioned to take on **more of a primary healthcare role**, performing patient assessments, suggesting over-the-counter medication, and referring patients to specialists. Unlike doctors, many pharmacies offer extended opening hours in the evenings and at weekends, which makes them a **more accessible point of call** for patients that need to fit in a glucose test or blood pressure check at the end of the working day.

To give patients the best service, pharmacies need to offer flexibility and convenience. Giving people the ability to book appointments for several types of checkups online, in person or on the phone, offering extended opening hours, and connecting with doctors on behalf (and with the explicit consent) of the patient are just some of the ways pharmacies are simplifying patients' lives, supporting doctors, and **making health services more available to the community**.



LloydsPharmacy in the UK provides an in-store service giving people the chance to speak to a healthcare professional about any health concerns and receive expert advice on how to improve their health. The Pharmacy team offers a range of healthcare services including screening for type 2 diabetes, asthma support, pain management, blood pressure checks and a stop smoking service. Many of these services are free and can be booked online.



UK chain LloydsPharmacy is offering in-store patient counseling for people affected by dementia through a partnership with Dementia Connect, a support service by the Alzheimer's Society. Across select branches, it offers free expert advice, support, and referrals for community members.

"As a lot of our pharmacy colleagues are part of the community where they are based, patients may feel more comfortable talking to them about any worries they have." said Kevin Birch, Chief Retail Officer at LloydsPharmacy's parent company, McKesson UK.

Supporting the local community's health and wellness

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As pharmacies are taking on the role of a primary care provider with a wide range of basic health services, they are also **supporting their local community's health and wellbeing**, offering everything from healthy diet consultations, diabetes support groups, mental health support services and sexual health clinics.

In its 2030 vision, the Pharmaceutical Group of the European Union (PGEU) expects pharmacies to form **part of a broader public health strategy**. The benefits they could offer, it says, are numerous: pharmacies could provide a more efficient, cost-effective and **patient-centered care model** that treats patients closer to their home. Indeed, most people have convenient access to at least one pharmacy near to where they live and work.

Pharmacies are therefore uniquely placed to support patients with everything from advice on common ailments such as coughs and colds, pain, skin conditions and digestive problems, through to tackling obesity, smoking, alcohol consumption and other substance misuse.

According to PGEU, people with chronic diseases managed by medication are **more likely to visit their community pharmacists than any other healthcare professional**. Again, this means that pharmacists can empower patients to make better decisions about their health and play a prominent role in health promotion, disease prevention and chronic disease management.

3 Offering more personalization and convenience

Industry experts believe that the pharmacy of the future will focus almost exclusively on **personalized patient care**, transforming from a point of transaction to a **point of interaction**. While personalization can take different forms, its ultimate goal is engage patients at the right time, on the channel they prefer, with information that is relevant to them.

For example, during the lockdowns Marionnaud France introduced a new service where customers could place orders via Whatsapp, and receive it within two hours via express delivery service. Watson China, which like Marrionaud is part of A.S. Watson Group, the world's largest international health and beauty retailer, offered personalized beauty advice to customers via WeChat Work. Watson also quickly updated its virtual makeup app in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia, so it would be optimized for people wearing face masks.

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The future of pharmacy needs to be seamless. People should be able to switch easily between our digital and physical services to find what works best for them. We know that there are four things our customers value above all else: convenience, simplicity, expertise and a personal touch.

Toby Anderson, CEO of McKesson UK

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Through its digital service Echo, McKesson UK lets patients order prescriptions and choose to either have their medicine delivered for free, or collect from their local LloydsPharmacy. The brand is seeking to simplify pharmacy and offer customers greater convenience. Echo also provides a wider range of functionality, including timely reminders when to order and take medicines, plus the ability to organize prescriptions for the entire family.



In Denmark, the Compliance Service in pharmacies supports patients with chronic diseases that have problems with compliance. Through a private consultation, they are given information and advice on the safe, effective and rational use of their medicines while also addressing healthy lifestyle measures. In the long term, the service empowers patients and increases the effectiveness of their treatment.



In Malaysia, digital healthcare platform DoctorOnCall offers all the services patients may need, online, from virtual consultations, to an online pharmacy, medication delivery, and specialist booking services. The company has partnered with insurance companies to offer people the ability to get medical advice with a general practitioner, and purchase medication online with free delivery.



Improving medical adherence

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Pharmacists should play a greater role in **helping patients manage medication** to maximize benefits and minimize risks, the Pharmaceutical Group of the European Union (PGEU) suggests. Effective pharmacist interventions can help patients understand more about their treatment, and also **prevent, report and mitigate adverse drug reactions** and poor medication adherence. The result could be improving clinical and cost effectiveness, and reducing waste of medication.

Some pharmacy organizations are turning to technology to improve medication adherence. This includes **mobile apps** designed to inform patients about the process and delivery status of prescription refills. **Near-field communication (NFC)** within blister packaging, or through a coded chip that synchronizes with a mobile phone app, is also increasingly used to send reminders to patients with a history of poor medication compliance. Other innovations include digital pill bottles, ingestible sensors, remote dispensing machines, and wearable biometric sensor patches designed to measure and improve medication adherence.

5 Optimizing the supply chain

Pharmacists are highly trained and trusted medical professionals. Yet, according to reports from the likes of Deloitte, most of them spend a disproportionate amount of time **counting pills and addressing clinical edits** rather than operating at the top of their license – for example, point-of-care testing and counseling. But modern technology can help relieve the pressure. Automations and artificial intelligence-powered systems can support busy pharmacists, taking care of optimizing stock control, controlling expiry dates, improving distribution of items across the chain and minimizing waste.

In the report “The future of pharmacy”, Deloitte envisions a future where retail pharmacies shift from convenience-store model to consolidated health destinations. Technology like 3D printing, kiosks and telehealth will **enhance and speed up product distribution**. Driverless cars, autonomous bots, and drones will make **same-day delivery** the norm. At the same time, robotics and AI algorithms can support pharmacists into taking more responsibilities as care providers. With legislation expected to change to reflect the changing role of pharmacists, we may be looking at a future where **pharmacies deliver medication fast and as needed, offer new therapies, and are the center for managing chronic diseases and general care**.



Building the pharmacy of tomorrow

Global consulting firm PwC describes the pharmacy of the future as a convener of plug-and-play partners—traditional and new entrants—serving consumers as their health hub. In this scenario, the pharmacy serves its local community as a **destination for primary care, prescriptions, point-of-care diagnostics, insurance, financing and insight into how to be well and stay well**. They use medical records and other data to anticipate patient needs and **proactively help people manage their health**, meeting their requests seamlessly, in the store, at home and on their mobile devices.

Flexible technology, built around automations and intelligence, is key to this vision. As pharmacies design their strategy for the future, they need to equip themselves with IT platforms that support their and their customers' current and future demands, and give them the agility to pivot quickly when needed, from providing services like vaccinations, or safely delivering medications to patients who can't go out of the house.

Tomorrow is almost here. Are you ready?

Your patients rely on you to give them the care and medications they need, when they need them. Does your technology enable you to be there for them, even when they can't go to the store, or need more personalized advice?

We can help you get the agility and information you need to provide 360-degree care, online and in-store, across health, wellness, and any other service you want to provide your community. We can help.

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