

ATM pharmacy launches in Bloemfontein

Twin City Mall in Bloemfontein is the newest site for the innovative ATM pharmacy that gives patients with chronic illnesses repeat medication in under five minutes.



The Pharmacy Dispensing Unit (PDU) was unveiled on 25 September, during Pharmacy Month, at the central community shopping centre, which is on main transport routes and is open for extended hours including weekends and public holidays. The first such dispensing unit was launched in Alexandra in Gauteng in March this year.



ATM pharmacy dispenses in under three minutes

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The Pharmacy Dispensing Unit works like an ATM for medication, with Skype-like audio-visual interaction between patient and a remotely located tele-pharmacy contact centre. Patients are able to talk to pharmacists in a call centre 400km away in Centurion, Gauteng - showcasing the benefits of tele-pharmacy to patients in rural and outlying areas. This allows patients to access accurate medicine information and counselling from qualified pharmacy staff.

The dispensing data is hosted in a secure cloud-based electronic software environment that interfaces with the robotic technology to dispense and label medication at the point of patient collection and interaction.

The system integrates with the clinical management processes of patients with chronic conditions at public facilities. It also reminds patients when to collect their medication which improves adherence. The date for the next collection is shown on the patient's receipt and prescription collection reminders are sent by SMS. Late collections are immediately identified and flagged for follow-up. Patients are serviced in all 11 languages and there is on-site support to help patients interact with the technology.



CCMDD programme

The launch of the dispensing unit in the Free State is the second phase of the Central Medicine Dispensing and Distribution (CCMDD) programme that will expand access to chronic medication for patients in rural communities. Further innovations that will be added to enhance access include a high-volume fast lane pre-dispensing service at the Twin City Mall PDUTM site and Prescription Collection Units (PCUsTM). PCUsTM are inexpensive, distribution and collection lockers which will be placed at various locations throughout the area as alternative medicine collection points.

This site services patients from primary facilities as well as chronic patients that are referred from tertiary and district hospitals. The technology will therefore positively impact high patient volume institutions such as district hospitals, regional hospitals and community health centre facilities as well as clinics, by reducing the patient load and therefore waiting times.

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