

Thriving—Not Just Surviving!!

On July 6th of this year, I will be celebrating my sixteenth year of ownership—having left my academic position at the University of Iowa. I left with a mission—to demonstrate that clinical services can indeed be implemented in the community pharmacy setting. It wasn't just the implementation of clinical services that was the end goal, but rather creating new revenue sources outside of dispensing medications. During my time at the University of Iowa College of Pharmacy, I also had a practice site at Main at Locust Pharmacy and my job was to create new revenue sources through clinical services. It was during my time at Main at Locust Pharmacy that I saw the reductions in dispensing revenues and the need to find alternative avenues to receive payment for services. So, when I had the opportunity to leave my college position, I did so with the full understanding that we needed to transform our practice to be able to deliver clinical services that added value and that payers/organizations/patients were willing to pay for.

Now, here we are sixteen years later. Since January of this year, my business partners and I have increased our corporation from two community-based pharmacies to eight pharmacies. The growth was planned, but with the intent of creating new opportunities including non-dispensing revenue. Several of our new practices have a 340b contract and one of our practices is a closed-door long-term care pharmacy—two areas that we were intentional with our growth strategy. But, as mentioned, we also are intentional on growing our non-dispensing revenues. One of our new practices, Towncrest Wellness Apothecary (TWA) is a cash-based practice only. The areas of focus of TWA are compounding and functional medicine including patient consultations. In the six months of opening that practice, we have experienced significant growth, new referrals, and a patient population that appreciates the value of pharmacists and the unique skills and knowledge we provide them.

The fourth area of our focus, our most successful financially, are clinical services including implementing new business models (e.g., direct contracting, concierge practices, and physician partnerships, etc.). We are successful because of the vision we laid out sixteen years ago—that we needed to free up the pharmacists to provide clinical services. We did this by implementing a robust medication synchronization program, utilizing our technicians to the top of their training/certification (technician product verification, triaging patients, managing medication synchronization and providing immunizations), optimizing our technology (including automation or robots, electronic clinical documentation, and e-care plans), ongoing monitoring and follow-up of our patients (continuous medication monitoring or CoMM), and collaboration with the providers (collaborative working relationships or CWR). This led to payer opportunities, revenue generation through clinical services delivery, new payment models, and consulting services. In other words, it was implementing the domains of Flip the Pharmacy that allowed us to be successful.

As we grow our corporation, I am reminded by a visit by representatives of one of our payers in our state to see what we were doing differently compared to other community pharmacy practices. I had challenged them to look at community pharmacy differently in terms of patient

outcomes and not just drug costs. After looking at their own claims data, they realized that their patients who used our pharmacy had lower total health care costs even though we had a more complex patient demographic. After their half-day visit one of the representatives turn to me as he was walking out the door and said the before the visit, he was wondering how an independent pharmacy can even survive in the current marketplace. Now as he was leaving, his final words were "You are not just surviving, you are thriving". That is now our motto for our corporation!!