

Engaging Your Patients from “The Coptic Orthodox Christian” Community

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Setting the Stage

A community pharmacy owner living in the greater St Louis area has a group Coptic Orthodox Christians building within 1 mile of their pharmacy. However, the Pharmacist notices that not many of these church members get their prescriptions filled at the store.

What can The Pharmacists do to become a trusted member in the community and increase the store's sales?

Objectives

1. Describe the history of Coptic Orthodox Christians Community in America
- 2 Review strategies for pharmacies to better engage with their patients and employees from .
3. Identify the stakeholders in the community committed to the health of patients from Coptic Orthodox Christians and explain how a pharmacy owner can expand his/her services to support this patient population

History of Coptic Orthodox Christians in America

The Coptic Orthodox Church has been the church of Egypt since the first century when Saint Mark the Apostle came to preach Christianity in Alexandria around 60 AD. Starting in the sixties of the twentieth century, Copts began to immigrate to the United States.. The number of Copts outside Egypt is currently about two million, and we now (April 2014) have nearly 550 churches on all continents of the world. In addition, we have several missionary churches in Canada, and four in the United States. As to the Coptic Orthodox Churches in Egypt, they are about 2,500. The number of bishops of the Holy Synod of the Coptic Church is now about 110, seven of them are in North America and two in Latin America.



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<https://www.stmaryofchicago.org/Home/AboutCopticChurch>

History of Coptic Orthodox Christians in America

Pope Shenouda III (enthroned in 1971) took personal charge of diaspora churches and made several pastoral visits to the U.S., notably in 1977, 1989, and annually thereafter. These visits included church dedications, ordinations, and retreats, boosting community cohesiveness. By 2010, the U.S. counted roughly 350,000 Coptic Christians, and another 150,000 in Canada—making it the second-largest Orthodox church presence in North America after Greek Orthodoxy. As of now, there are over 200 Coptic Orthodox churches in the U.S.—and numerous seminaries, charitable initiatives, and cultural projects

Differences between Coptic Orthodox Christians and Orthodox Christians

The main difference between Coptic Orthodox Christians and what many refer to as “regular Orthodox Christians” (typically meaning Eastern Orthodox Christians) lies in church history, theology, and culture. Coptic Orthodox belong to the Oriental Orthodox communion, which rejected the Council of Chalcedon (451 AD). In contrast, the Eastern Orthodox accepted Chalcedon and are part of the Eastern Orthodox communion. Coptic Orthodox (Oriental Orthodox) follow Miaphysitism—believing Christ has one united nature, fully divine and fully human, in accordance with Cyril of Alexandria. Eastern Orthodox affirm the Dyophysite doctrine: Christ exists in two distinct natures, divine and human, united in one person

https://www.bbc.com/religion/religions/christianity/subdivisions/coptic_1.shtm

<https://www.holytrinitytn.org/post/eastern-and-oriental-orthodox-what-s-the-difference-1>



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History of The Coptic Orthodox Christians in America

CANADA - APRIL 29:
Cornerstone of first Coptic Orthodox church in North America is blessed by Shenouda III (right); Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark; the spiritual leader of more than 500;000 Copts around the world. The site is just off Pharmacy Ave.; near Scarborough's northern boundary. Church members; officials look on. (Photo by Colin McConnell/Toronto Star via Getty Images)



Statistics of Coptic Orthodox Christians in America

Top 5 Coptic Orthodox Church States (2020)¹ [\[View all States\]](#)

Rank	State	Congregations	Adherents	Adherence Rate
1	New Jersey	27	27,658	2.98
2	Tennessee	17	17,759	2.57
3	California	52	47,364	1.20
4	Virginia	16	9,689	1.12
5	New York	18	16,205	0.80

Statistics of Coptic Orthodox Christians in America

Top 5 Coptic Orthodox Church Counties (2020)¹ [\[View all Counties\]](#)

Rank ▲	County ◆	Congregations ◆	Adherents ◆	Adherence Rate ◆
1	Davidson County, TN	8	14,254	19.91
2	Hudson County, NJ	3	9,300	12.83
3	Richmond County, NY	3	3,585	7.23
4	Rutherford County, TN	2	2,275	6.66
5	Monmouth County, NJ	2	4,236	6.58

CORE Beliefs

Who We Are

Coptic” means “Egyptian,” and Christians living in Egypt identify themselves as Coptic Christians. As a denomination they originated in the city of Alexandria, one of the most faithful, respected, and fruitful cities during the Apostolic Period.

Our Story

The Coptic Orthodox Church, founded by St. Mark in 1st-century Egypt, is one of the oldest Christian churches in the world.

What we believe

Infant and Adult Baptism, Confession, Communion, Trinity, The Bible and Salvation

What we do

They worship through liturgical prayer, chanting, Scripture readings, and the Divine Liturgy (Holy Communion). They also practice fasting, celebrate feast days, live a sacramental life, and follow teachings rooted in the early Church and monastic tradition.



Engagement

Employees, Patients

Creating a business proposition around a niche market



Engaging Your Patients: **Pharmacy Staff Greetings**

Each interaction is an opportunity to practice _____.

Attentiveness

Honesty

Compassion

Patience

Respectfulness

Creating a relaxing atmosphere

Trustworthiness

Repeating important messages

Key Takeaway Understanding patients and communicating across differences will help to show your inclusivity and project that you are open to the community.

Community Connected Patient Survey

- Are there any foods or dishes that you consume during festivals or other times that you would like your pharmacist to be aware of?
- Do you have any preference of gender for pharmacy health activities that may require you to be touched e,g vaccine administration , blood pressure testing, A1c testing.
- Do you need to go to a private area during activities like vaccine administration?
- Would you like to have a prayer area in the pharmacy?
- Do you have any food allergies



Key Takeaway: Optimizing your technology to reflect Religion, Ethnicity , Special Interest Groups can help customize your service.

Engaging Your Employees

Coptic Orthodox Christians observe several significant religious holidays rooted in ancient Christian tradition. These include major feasts such as Christmas (January 7), Epiphany (January 19), Palm Sunday, Easter, and the Feast of Nayrouz (Coptic New Year, September 11). Fasting is a central spiritual discipline in the Coptic Church and is practiced before most major feasts, including the Great Lent, Advent, and the Fast of the Apostles. Fasting typically involves abstaining from animal products and sometimes from food and drink entirely during certain hours. Some Coptic Orthodox holidays are not public holidays, so an employee may request time off or a shift change in order to attend church services and celebrate with family.

Some Coptic Orthodox Christian holidays are public holidays while others are not public holidays - hence an employee may ask

- for the day off to celebrate with his family
- to change shifts with someone else

Key Takeaway: As an employer, knowing when these days are will help in creating the schedule



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Here are the most significant CopticOrthodox Christian holidays:

Palm Sunday

- Palm Sunday, known in the Coptic Church as “Sha’anini” (Hosanna Sunday), commemorates Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem and marks the beginning of Holy Week
- It is one of the Seven Major Feasts and is celebrated on the seventh Sunday of Great Lent



Christmas

- Celebrated on December 25 in some Orthodox traditions and on January 7 in others
- Christmas marks the birth of Jesus Christ



Epiphany (Theophany)

- Celebrated on January 6 (Gregorian calendar) or January 19 for those following the Julian calendar
- It commemorates the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River
- It is marked by the blessing of water and the Great Blessing of the Waters, in which priests sprinkle holy water on congregants and their homes.



Feast of Nayrouz

- The Feast of Nayrouz marks the beginning of the Coptic New Year: the first of Thout
- prayers are all done in the joyful tune and At the end of the prayer, the Concluding Canon of the Feast of the Nayrouz is chanted..

Weight Loss Consultations

CDC-Recognized Family Healthy Weight Programs

FHWPs are comprehensive, family-based lifestyle change programs. They help children with overweight or obesity make progress toward a healthier weight through positive behavior changes. FHWPs are safe, effective treatments that are designed for children and their families or caregivers. FHWPs are also known as [intensive health behavior and lifestyle treatment](#) programs.

Several national organizations, including the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) and the American Psychological Association, recommend FHWPs to help treat childhood obesity

Key Takeaway: Pharmacy Owners can consider a [Direct Pay Services- 8 week Program](#) , body and spirit are intertwined



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<https://www.cdc.gov/family-healthy-weight/php/recognized-programs/index.html>

Self Help Classes at the Church

Curriculum is designed to have classes run once a week for 3 months.

- 1) Education for Better Work
- 2) Starting and Growing my own Business
- 3) Managing Finances
- 4) Emotional Resilience

Key Takeaway: Pharmacy owners can consider collaborating with the church to help offer these programs, and refer patients to these programs.

Fast Offerings

On many Wednesdays and Fridays, as well as during designated fasting seasons like Great Lent, the Nativity Fast, and St. Mary's Fast, Coptic Orthodox Christians abstain from meat, dairy, and other animal products as an act of spiritual discipline, repentance, and humility. Fasting is always practiced alongside prayer, Scripture reading, and acts of mercy. While no fixed amount is required, Coptic Christians are strongly encouraged to give alms—offering support to the poor and those in need—as an essential part of the fasting experience. The money saved from more modest meals is often redirected toward charitable giving, including donations collected by local parishes, monasteries, and dioceses. Many churches also organize food drives or relief efforts during fasts. This tradition reflects a central teaching of the Coptic Church: that fasting without love, compassion, and generosity is spiritually incomplete

Key Takeaway: offer to the Priest to set up a house charge account for the local congregation to facilitate payment for members receiving aid.

Medication Counselling Services

Medical Billing

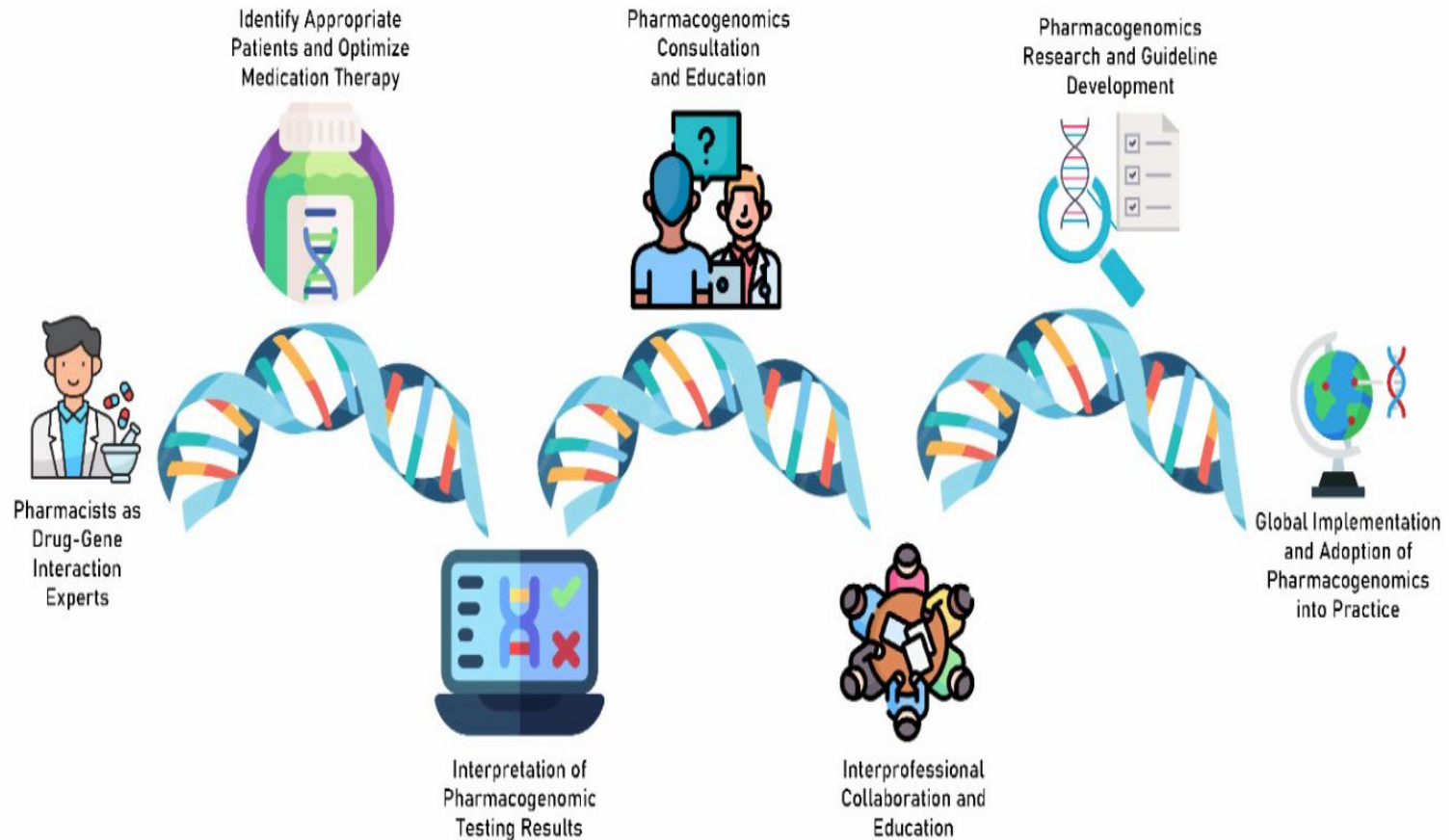
Medication Therapy Management (MTM)

- A program that helps patients get the most benefit from their medications
- Helps patients avoid costly medication problems
- Helps patients adhere to their medication regimens
- Helps patients avoid preventable adverse drug events
- Helps patients identify lower-cost medication options
- Helps patients answer questions or concerns about their medications

Key Takeaway: Depending on the state regulations pharmacist may be able to bill for these services.

A local bishop may appreciate (and be willing to pay for) MTM services focused on cost effectiveness to aid members in reducing their costs.

Pharmacogenomic Testing at Your Pharmacy



<https://www.mdpi.com/2226-4787/11/6/180>

Travel Immunizations

Mission Trips

Before traveling to any international destination, the CDC recommends travelers to get the following vaccines:

- Chickenpox (Varicella)
- Diphtheria-Tetanus-Pertussis
- Influenza
- Measles-Mumps-Rubella (MMR)
- Polio
- Shingles

Key Takeaway : Pharmacists can better advise on immunizations needed for mission trips to countries that may be endemic for certain diseases.

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>

Coptic Orthodox Christian Missionary in America



On the 1st Sunday of the blessed month of Babah, October 15, 2023, His Eminence Metropolitan Serapion celebrated the Divine Liturgy at Christ The Redeemer American Coptic Orthodox Church in Lakewood, California.

<https://www.lacopts.org/news/his-eminence-metropolitan-serapion-celebrates-the-divine-liturgy-at-christ-the-redeemer-american-coptic-orthodox-church/>

Engagement Community Stakeholders

Networking- Going outside your comfort
zone



“A Place of Worship for Coptic Orthodox Christians

Temples, are all sacred spaces of worship.

Places of worship can also be local communities called Parishes

A parish is a local church community, typically organized under a single church building where services are held. Members gather for:

- Worship and sacraments (especially the Divine Liturgy)
- Religious education
- Charitable work
- Fellowship and community events



Key Takeaway: Churches are worship centers

- “a place to quiet the mind, look deeply, and enjoy the wonders of life within and around us through the practices of sitting meditation, walking meditation, mindful eating, deep relaxation meditation, and sharing togetherness”



The Nicaea North American Theological Conference

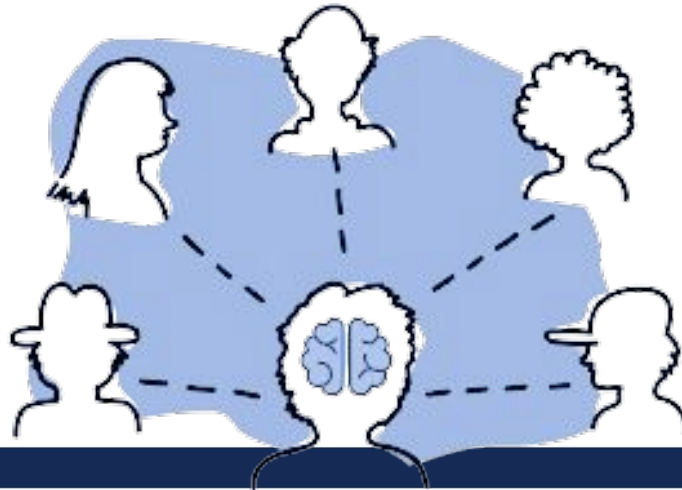
The Nicaea North American Theological Conference of 2025 was a landmark gathering for Coptic Orthodox and other Christian communities in North America, connecting local theological reflection to a broader, global reflection on the enduring witness of the Council of Nicaea for unity, doctrine, and mission in the modern world.

The Nicaea North American Theological Conference 2025 was hosted by Saint Athanasius & Saint Cyril Coptic Orthodox Theological School (ACTS). The conference was being held at St. Stephen Christian Retreat & Conference Center from May 12-15, 2025.



Avoiding, Debunking , Demystifying

Stereotypes



Implicit Bias & Stereotypes

Implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. An implicit bias can make us susceptible to unintentionally acting in ways that are inconsistent with our values. Although you do not choose to have an implicit bias, you can choose to be aware of it and combat its effects.

Two important first steps are to:

- Recognize that we all have implicit biases and that implicit bias can negatively affect clinical interactions and outcomes
- Accept the responsibility to identify and understand your implicit biases

Next steps you can take to confront your implicit biases and reduce stereotypic thinking. Consistent and conscious use of these strategies can help you create a habit of unbiased thinking:

- Stereotype Replacement
- Counter stereotype imaging
- Individuating
- Perspective taking
- Contact
- Emotional Regulation
- Mindfulness

Confronting Implicit Bias

Stereotype replacement	Become aware of the stereotypes you hold and create non-stereotypical alternatives to them
Counter-stereotypic Imaging	Remember or imagine someone from a stereotyped group who does not fit the stereotype
Individuating	See each person as an individual, not a group member; pay attention to things about them besides the stereotypes of their group
Perspective-taking	Imagine the perspective of someone from a group different than your own (“Put yourself in the other person’s shoes.”)
Contact	Seek ways to get to know people from different social groups. Build your confidence in interacting with people who are different from you. Seek opportunities to engage in discussions in safe environments, spend time with people outside your usual social groups, or volunteer in a community different than your own.
Emotional regulation	Reflect on your “gut feelings” and negative reactions to people from different social groups. Be aware that positive emotions during a clinical encounter make stereotyping less likely.
Mindfulness	Keep your attention on the present moment so you can recognize a stereotypic thought before you act on it

Combating Stereotypes

To combat stereotypes, you can educate yourself, speak up, and engage with people from different backgrounds. You can also challenge stereotypes in the workplace by promoting inclusive leadership

Educate yourself

- Learn about stereotypes and how they can be harmful
- Read books and listen to music from different cultures
- Take cultural competency training

Speak up

- Call out stereotyping when you see it
- Point out exceptions to stereotypes
- Remind people that stereotypes are generalizations and don't apply to everyone

Engage with others

- Talk to people from different backgrounds
- Volunteer in a community different from your own
- Spend time with people outside your usual social groups

Use storytelling

- Create memorable stories that challenge stereotypes
- Empower others to tell stories that offer counter narratives to stereotypes

Stereotypes

1. “They’re not really Christian.”

- **Fact:** Copts trace the founding of their Church in Alexandria to St. Mark (ca. AD 49) and affirm the Nicene Creed, fully embracing orthodox Christian beliefs including Trinity and Christ’s divine-human nature.

2. They worship idols or saints.”

- **Fact:** Like other Orthodox traditions, Copts use icons and venerate saints, but this is clearly distinct from worship and is about respect and intercession.

3. “They worship idols or saints.”

- **Fact:** Like other Orthodox traditions, Copts use icons and venerate saints, but this is clearly distinct from worship and is about respect and intercession.



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<https://medium.com/%40Church.org/coptic-christians-who-are-they-and-what-is-their-belief-system-4e349957600e>

<https://catalog.obitel-minsk.com/blog/2022/09/the-teachings-and-practices-of-the-coptic-orthodox-church>

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Stereotypes

4. “They’re all Egyptian immigrants.”

- **Clarification:** While the term “Copt” means “Egyptian” in origin, the Church now welcomes converts from diverse backgrounds and communities worldwide

5. “They don’t believe in the Trinity or full divinity of Christ.”

- **Reality:** Coptic theology is miaphysite, affirming one united nature of Christ (divine and human) in a unified Person—not monophysite denial of his humanity. They manifest full belief in Christ’s divinity and humanity.

7. “They only marry within their community.”

- **Context:** While traditional preference is endogamous to maintain sacramental unity, converts and interdenominational marriages do occur—with pastoral guidance.

