



The Expanding Role of Pharmacies

Utilising Flexible Space Solutions

INTRODUCTION

The role of pharmacies today is becoming increasingly significant in the delivery of health services. Pharmacists are the health professionals who not only have the most detailed knowledge of drugs and their applications, but are heavily relied upon by both the community and medical industry as the first port of call for many health ailments.

With the trend towards added consulting services and a host of specialised products far beyond that of the traditional product dispenser, pharmacies are facing the increasing need to adapt their store space to accommodate their added responsibilities.

CURRENT STATE OF PLAY

The distinction between the role of GPs and that of pharmacists is becoming far less pronounced. Particularly when it comes to the administration of vaccinations and ongoing health consultations.

Despite arguments for and against the progression, president of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, George Tambassis is supportive of the expansion, arguing pharmacists are perfectly capable of taking on the new role.

“We are probably the most under-utilised health professional on Australian landscape and we get many, many more patients... coming through our doors, so we believe, certainly in areas where there’s a need, we can certainly take up the slack,” Tambassis saidⁱ.

Professor Lisa Nissen from the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia also believes the shift will help boost vaccination rates.

“There’s a significant amount of people in the community that aren’t covered under the National Immunisation Program...And so if they’re not covered through their workplace they may just choose not to get immunisedⁱⁱ [under the traditional system].”

EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES

In a global context, the successful administration of vaccinations and other health checks are already a reality in overseas markets such as the UK, USA, Ireland and Canada – in some cases for over a decade.

The adaptation has also begun locally, with a number of Australian pharmacies now offering vaccinations, blood pressure tests and weight loss consultations as well as other personal health services.

This is in addition to the recent launch of the pharmacy flu vaccination pilot program in Queensland that proposed to utilise 100 Australian pharmacies in the administration of vaccinationsⁱⁱⁱ.

Though the developments have prompted resistance from the Australian Medical Association (AMA), the Pharmacy Guild of Australia has brushed off the claims as ‘negative and alarmist’.

The initiative is designed to ease the burden on GPs and promote a more sustainable pharmacy model than simply that of over-the-counter dispensing.



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DIVIDE AND CONQUER

Despite pharmacists possessing the requisite expertise, traditional store layouts aren't necessarily suited to these emerging demands. Many existing pharmacy spaces need to become more flexible and adaptable, effectively addressing consultation privacy requirements without compromising critical floor space.

By broadening their services, pharmacies will almost certainly increase foot traffic and revenue streams. From the consumers' point of view, they will be offered more accessible, time-saving and affordable health services.

With the market evolving so quickly, it's important this problematic floor space issue is addressed sooner rather than later. To fully capitalise on future service growth and provide customers with better medical outcomes, pharmacist must begin to seek viable space saving solutions.

Financial burdens and trading distributions caused by store renovations are an important consideration for pharmacists trying to thrive against a backdrop of increasing financial pressures.

Permanent fixed spaces often limit, rather than enhance, store layouts and do not necessarily match the requirements of providing adaptable spaces. However, costly building renovation work and unadaptable spaces can be avoided by considering cheaper and more effective temporary room dividing solutions.

FLEXIBLE SOLUTIONS

Portable partitions or mobile room dividers can serve more functions than simply segmenting a store. Rather, they can act as mobile or temporary consultation spaces.

Many room dividers are made from sound absorbing materials so make excellent noise barriers, providing temporary privacy solution as and when required.

A private space can be created in a matter of seconds – for however long it's required – and can be packed away just as easily.

When screens are not in use, they can be folded away and wheeled back into the storage cupboard without fuss by any members of staff.

As Australia's leading mobile room divider brand, Portable Partitions Australia are perfectly positioned to help pharmacists better utilise existing floor space. Quick, simple and cost-effective solutions are available via a large range of affordable room dividers and screens.

This solution has already been successfully deployed in the USA where the country's largest pharmacist chain Wallgreens have utilised over 7,000 units across their network of stores. Customised panels were created to ensure the privacy screens could also double up as information boards.

Use of Portable Partitions Australia folding polycarbonate room divider - Chemmart Pharmacy, Logan (QLD)



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- i Pharmacists reject doctor criticism of flu vaccine trial
<http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2013/s3926273.htm>
- ii Pharmacists reject doctor criticism of flu vaccine trial
<http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2013/s3926273.htm>
- iii Flu vaccination trial starting soon in Queensland pharmacies
<https://www.myhealthcareer.com.au/pharmacy/pharmacist-vaccinations>