



Assessing Patient Awareness of Services at Parkland Pharmacy: A Basis for Strategic Marketing to Improve Health Outcomes



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Background and Description of Current Business Environment

Independent community pharmacies continue to face increasing financial pressures due to declining prescription reimbursement rates, growing large chain pharmacies, and the influence of pharmacy benefit managers. To remain competitive, independent pharmacies must diversify their services beyond prescription dispensing. Parkland Pharmacy is an independent community pharmacy chain operating six locations across central Missouri and servicing patients across four counties. They have chosen to adopt a differentiation business strategy that focuses on expanding clinical and non-dispensing services. However, internal data indicates that utilization of several of these services remain low, suggesting that patients may be unaware of service available.

Objectives

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the effectiveness of Parkland Pharmacy's current marketing strategies to promote their pharmacy services across its entire patient population. It aimed to identify key patient demographics served by Parkland, determine which marketing strategies are most effective in promoting services, and identify areas where marketing may be improved to increase patient usage of services. The overall goal was to aid Parkland Pharmacy in its mission to improve the health of their patients and positively impact the communities they serve.

Methods

A survey was conducted among adult patients of Parkland Pharmacy between the ages of 18 and 89 years. Following IRB approval, participants were recruited over a two-month period through in-person and telehealth communication and social media. The survey collected demographic information including age, town of residence, and primary pharmacy location. Additional questions assessed patient awareness of pharmacy services, effective marketing strategies for promotion, and interest in utilizing current pharmacy services. Data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel, and descriptive statistics were used to summarize the survey responses reported as percentages.

Results

A total of 41 participants initiated the survey, with 34 participants completing the demographic and service awareness questions. Most participants resided in Farmington, Missouri and reported primarily using the Farmington location for their pharmacy services.

Patient awareness of pharmacy services varied among participants. Vaccinations, health screenings, and home delivery services demonstrated the highest awareness while services such as medication synchronization, drug takeback programs, durable medical equipment, and injectable medication counseling was lower. Awareness of specialized services including compounding, community health work services, and educational course was minimal. This information is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Service Awareness

Service	Awareness
Vaccinations	76%
Health Screenings	65%
Home Delivery	65%
Injectable Medication Counseling	29%
Medication Synchronization	26%
Drug Takeback	26%
Durable Medical Equipment	26%
Community Health Worker Services	9%
Compounding Services	15%
Biobical HRT Compounding	3%
Health Information Courses	6%
Unaware of all services	6%

Table 2. Marketing Strategies

Marketing Strategy	Percent
In-pharmacy signage	63%
Word of Mouth	48%
Pharmacy Staff	48%
Social Media	15%
Doctors' Office	7%
Community Health Fair	4%

Analyses of marketing strategies demonstrated that communication within the pharmacy setting was the most effective. Participants most frequently reported learning about pharmacy services through in-pharmacy signage, interactions with pharmacy staff, and word-of-mouth. Marketing channels such as social media, physician offices, and community events were reported less frequently. Data is summarized in Table 2.

Discussion

The results of this research demonstrated that patient awareness of pharmacy services varies. This indicates that certain services are successfully reaching patients while others may benefit from improvement in marketing. Vaccinations, health screenings, and delivery services are often associated with community pharmacies and involve direct patient interaction, which may have contributed to their higher levels of awareness. However, services that differentiate Parkland Pharmacy from their competitors like medication synchronization and compliance packaging demonstrated lower awareness. Increasing marketing of these services presents an opportunity to improve service utilization and improve patient outcomes. This also highlights the importance of direct communication within the pharmacy setting. Participants reported in-pharmacy signage, interactions with pharmacy staff, and word of mouth as the most effective marketing strategies. Expanding these and encouraging pharmacy staff to actively discuss available services with patients may help increase awareness.

Some pharmacy locations response rates were limited, with only patients from two of the four counties services represented. This limits the ability to evaluate awareness within those communities, but it also suggests that current marketing methods may not be practical strategies for this patient population. Targeted outreach may need to be deployed to improve outreach.

Opportunities for Future Research

Future research should include a larger and more geographically representative sample and explore additional barriers that may influence patient utilization of pharmacy services. Further studies may also evaluate the effectiveness of targeted marketing interventions designed to increase patient awareness.

Conclusion

This research demonstrates that while some pharmacy services are widely recognized by patients, awareness of several other differentiating services remains limited. Direct communication, such as signage and interactions with pharmacy staff, appear to be the most effective for reaching patients in the demographic area. Expanding these strategies and increasing promotion of services with lower awareness may help improve medication adherence, increase service utilization, and support long-term sustainability of Parkland Pharmacy.

Parkland Pharmacy's Mission:

Committed to Improving the Health of Our Patient and Positively Impacting the Communities we Serve