

COMMUNITY PHARMACY FOR THE FUTURE

Featured Article—Whale Tail Pharmacy

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RxPlus Mission

RxPlus Pharmacies, Inc. is an organization of health care providers which creates value by promoting the economic, professional, educational, and political advancement of community pharmacy. We do this for the health and well being of our communities.

If you find any errors or omissions, or if you have any comments regarding the Website, you can fill out the email form following the "Contact Us" button of the homepage!



Originally published in the National Rural Health Association's Rural Roads spring 2010 magazine By Lindsey V. Corey www.RuralHealthWeb.org

Pharmacists serve remote island By Lindsey V. Corey

Bill and Sarah Altland are always on a mission, and often on the go. From Arkansas to Zaire, the pharmacists have spent their 30-year marriage serving the underserved in remote areas. Their focus was on helping others. There was always food on the table, but income was an afterthought.

A volunteer opportunity at a mission clinic brought them to rural Alaska a decade ago. For a year, Sarah served as an unpaid pharmacist in Glenallen, while Bill relieved pharmacists across Alaska. "We're both from small towns in Arkansas, and we knew we liked Alaska so I filled in at about 20 places around the state to make grocery money and to find a job," he says. "I can't describe it; I just had a good feeling about this place." Soon the couple was headed for an even more remote assignment on the country's third largest island. Bill and Sarah shared the sole pharmacist position at an Alaskan Native clinic, one of two clinics on Prince of Wales (POW) Island.

A whale of a tale Word spread on the island, population 3,600, that two pharmacists had moved in, and the Altlands were encouraged to open POW's first drug store.

"We didn't come here with the intent to run



Bill and Sarah Altland

a business, just the vision of helping people," Sarah says. "But everyone was so supportive, enthusiastic and grateful. Even though it provides us with a livelihood, we see it as a mission in a way." In 2001, the Altlands opened Whale Tail Pharmacy in Craig, the island's "hub," population 1,100. "Even before we opened, both clinics were calling," recalls Bill. "So I feel like we really fill the need. It's a responsibility we've created in the community, but the need was there all along." Tina Bell, a long-time local nurse, realized the need several years earlier and had researched the viability of starting an independent island pharmacy but shelved the idea when recruitment efforts failed. "When the Whale Tail opened, the whole island was ecstatic," Bell remembers. "No more waiting for flown in or mailed prescriptions. Not to mention we have two wonderful people in our midst that have big hearts and try to accommodate every need."

Cont. on enclosed insert

President's Message

Dear Members,

Every year in February the RxPlus board of directors meets to do our strategic planning for the year. At our meeting this year one of our main areas of concern was developing more effective communication, both to and from our members.

We understand that you are busy running your businesses and it is not always convenient to stop what you are doing to read and respond to a fax or an email. But please understand that your opinions and input is important to us! If there are better, more effective ways to communicate with you, let us know. We have formed a committee to look into ways to improve member communications, and would appreciate any suggestions.

Are you interested in becoming a board member or attending board meetings? You can find out how your organization works! If so, send us an email at info.rxplus.com or call the office at (303) 463-4875.

Sincerely,
K.C. Owen
Co-President
RxPlus Pharmacies

Executive Director's Message

This is the year of change and during the next few months we will be introducing some very exciting initiatives. The first being Rx Ally, which in my eyes is a game changer. If you are tired of filling prescriptions for nothing, and feel like pharmacy has become just another commodity like crest toothpaste, then you need to stay tuned. Last year Walgreens made a strategic decision not to accept the PBM's take it or leave it program and it has cost them dearly, but they have not let down. Never in my imagination would I have thought that independents would be partnering with this giant but the times have changed and we must change with them. Rx Ally has brought together all of the major independent group purchasing organizations, eight regional chains and Walgreens. The purpose of the group is to put value back into pharmacy and show what pharmacy can do to lower overall healthcare costs. With the support of the information technology Walgreens brings to the table and the vast network of community pharmacies in this group we can make a difference. That difference can only come with change. That is why I am asking for your full attention and support in the next year. We will be asking for your participation and need to get responses on a timely basis. That leads me to my next topic.

Member involvement and communication will be the critical key to your success in the near future. We are in the process of implementing some creative communication tools. The key to that is to make communication to and from our members easy and hopefully fun. We are in the process of testing this new line of communication and once we know this works we want to roll this out to all of our members at the annual meeting. On to the next topic.

We are celebrating our 30th Anniversary this year and hope to see all of you at our annual meeting which will be held at the Westin Hotel in Westminster, CO on August 17th-19th. This is a great opportunity to learn more about all of the initiatives we are working on and better yet network with your peers. You will also be able to get the entire CE you need for the year. I promise you will not be bored. We have some very fun activities planned so please set your calendars. If you need help arranging for pharmacist relief please give our office a call and we will do whatever we can to get you help.

Even if you are on the right track, you will get run over if you just sit there. Will Rogers

Grant Kinn
Executive Director

GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS REPORT

Governmental Affairs Newsletter Update
By Brad Young

April 2012

Colorado Legislative Session:

The primary pharmacy bill this legislative session has been The Pharmacy Practice Act. A bill must pass the legislature this year to continue the Board of Pharmacy. Val Kalnins, Executive Director of the Colorado Pharmacists Society, has been providing key amendments to the bill sponsor, Representative Ken Summers (R-Lakewood), and the bill drafter. Val has done a brilliant job of protecting the profession. For instance, the Department of Regulatory Agencies recommended that long term care facilities have the option of registering as pharmacies. Val amended the language in the bill to allow pharmacies that service long term care to register as “specialized pharmacy outlets” that may act as consulting pharmacies. The goal is to have a different set of rules that will allow some flexibility for pharmacies serving LTC facilities. The bill has gone through two House committees so far and still has to be heard in House Appropriations and on the House floor before going to the Senate.

PBM Audits: We had hoped to have a PBM audit regulation bill this year but The Speaker of the House didn't want to have controversial health care bills introduced late in the session. We have had a meeting with the Colorado Association of Health Plans to discuss the problems with PBM audits, but they have not made any suggestions about non-legislative ways to address the problems. Representative Janak Joshi (R-Colorado Springs) will definitely be our ally for a bill next year if we can't get the Health Plans to work on a non-legislative solution.

Pseudoephedrine Bill HB12-1325:

The bill would require all meth precursor sales to be recorded in a national database. There is a link to the bill on RxPlus.com.

Colorado Medicaid:

The Mercer Actual Acquisition Cost (AAC) and Cost of Dispensing (COD) surveys are complete. Thanks to members who participated! Retail pharmacy had a response rate of nearly 50%, including chain outlets. In our last meeting with Medicaid they said they expect the draft report will be ready around the first week of May. I hope you will all read it and provide responses. I plan to post it in the Members Only section of Rxplus.com. Val Kalnin's student intern from CU, Rob McLaren has a statistics background and will be helping us review the report.

Colorado Medicaid Payment Error Rate Measurement (PERM) Audits:

The federal government is requiring states to perform these audits. Pharmacies will receive the audits by FedEx mail requiring a signature. We were told that the purpose of the audits is to verify the paperwork is being properly processed and retained by the pharmacy as required. You must respond by the time indicated in the audit or the state will recoup the payments.

Federal Issues:

Please call, email, or write your member of Congress and ask him/her to cosponsor and support H.R. 4215. According to NCPA: “The bill, introduced by Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-Wash.), would address two primary threats to the ability of community pharmacies to continue serving seniors enrolled in the Medicare prescription drug program, also known as Part D.

Mark your Calendar

Colorado Pharmacists
Society Annual Meeting
& Exhibition
Colorado Springs, CO
May 3-5

Northwest Pharmacy Convention
Coeur d'Alene, WA
May 31 - June 3

Nebraska Pharmacy Association
Annual Convention
Lincoln, NE
June 8-9

Wyoming Pharmacy Association
Annual Convention
Sheridan, WY
June 22-23

New Mexico Pharmacists
Association 83rd Annual
Convention
Albuquerque, NM
June 23-24

McKesson Trade Show
Las Vegas, NV
June 24-28

Cardinal Trade Show
Orlando, FL
July 11-14

RxPlus Annual Meeting
Westminster, CO
Aug. 17-19

Kansas Pharmacy Association
Annual Conference and Trade
Show
Lawrence, KS
Sept. 28-30

NCPA 114th Annual Convention
and Trade Show
San Diego, CA
Oct. 13-17



Governmental Affairs Newsletter Update Cont.

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RxPlus Pharmacies, Inc. is an organization of health care providers which creates value by promoting the economic, professional, educational, and political advancement of community pharmacy. We do this for the health and well being of our communities.

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First, the legislation would give local pharmacists some basic insight into one "black box" of pharmacy reimbursement—a Part D plan's "maximum allowable cost" or MAC. Currently, independent pharmacies must evaluate take-it-or-leave-it contract offers from Part D plans or pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) that leave pharmacists in the dark as to how reimbursement caps, or MACs, are determined for many common generic medications. As a result, independent pharmacies are increasingly—and without warning—reimbursed at rates that fluctuate and fail to cover either the pharmacy's cost of dispensing or its cost of acquiring that particular drug.

Second, Rep. McMorris Rodgers' proposal would address abusive pharmacy audits by Part D plan sponsors (or their designees). Presently, community pharmacists are forced to take time away from serving patients in order to grapple with a patchwork system of Part D auditing requirements. Auditors routinely recoup large sums from pharmacies over narrow technical or clerical issues.

Express Scripts/Medco Merger:

Unfortunately, the merger has been approved by the FTC. NCPA and NACDS have combined forces in a lawsuit to block the merger and have asked the judge to not allow the companies to combine their assets until the court can review the merits of the case. NCPA is asking for donations to fund the legal action. You can go to <http://www.ncpanet.org/index.php/ldf> to make a donation online. RxPlus has donated \$5,000 to the cause.

RxPlus Web Site:

Please take a few minutes to check out our web site. *New features* include:

1. **A classified ads section *open to members only* that will allow you to list products you have to sell to other Rx Plus pharmacies.**
2. You can leave questions in the FAQ section.
3. Take our Web Site Survey to make comments and recommendations.

Please call for your log in information, and if you have suggested topics and links, please let us know!

Interested in hiring a summer intern, year-round employee, or newly-graduated pharmacist? Or maybe even someone to work all year? The members of the University of Colorado NCPA Student Chapter are ready and willing to get out in the workforce and learn all about the independent pharmacy world. Just contact Grant with the following information:

- pharmacy name and location
 - employer contact information (phone number and/or email)
 - job description/requirements (CV/resume, prior experience, etc.)
 - employment duration (summer, year-round, # hours/week)
-

Visit our new website to view or post **classified ads** at www.rxplus.com, call the office at 303-463-4875 for your member login id and password!

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