

COMMUNITY PHARMACY FOR THE FUTURE

Featured Article

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RxPlus Mission

RxPlus Pharmacies, Inc. exists for the economic, professional, and political benefit of community pharmacy and the health and well being of the community

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!



LETTER FROM NUCLA, COLORADO

DR. DON

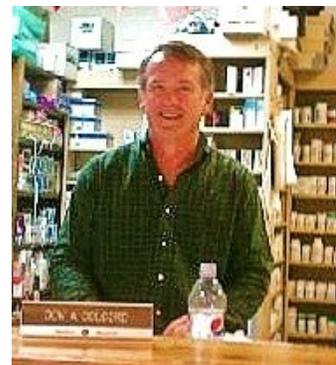
The life of a small-town druggist.

**BY PETER HESSLER, THE NEW YORKER
SEPTEMBER 26, 2011**

In the southwestern corner of Colorado, where the Uncompahgre Plateau descends through spruce forest and scrubland toward the Utah border, there is a region of more than four thousand square miles which has no hospitals, no department stores, and only one pharmacy. The pharmacist is Don Colcord, who lives in the town of Nucla. More than a century ago, Nucla was founded by idealists who hoped their community would become the "center of Socialistic government for the world." But these days it feels like the edge of the earth. Highway 97 dead-ends at the top of Main Street; the population is around seven hundred and falling. The nearest traffic light is an hour and a half away. When old ranching couples drive their pickups into Nucla, the wives leave the passenger's side empty and sit in the middle of the front seat, close enough to touch their husbands. It's as if something about the landscape—those endless hills, that vacant sky—makes a person appreciate the intimacy of a Ford F-150 cab.

Don Colcord has owned Nucla's Apothecary Shoppe for more than thirty years. In the past, such stores played a key role in American rural health care, and this region had three more pharmacies, but all of them have closed. Some people drive eighty miles just to visit the Apothecary Shoppe. It consists of a few rows of grocery shelves, a gift-card rack, a Pepsi fountain, and a diabetes section, which is decorated with the mounted heads of two mule deer and an antelope. Next to the game heads is the pharmacist's counter. Customers don't line up at a discreet distance, the way city folk do; in Nucla they crowd the counter and talk loudly about health problems.

"What have you heard about sticking your head in a beehive?" This on a Tuesday afternoon, from a heavyset man suffering from arthritis and an acute desire to find low-cost treatment.



"It's been used, progressive bee-sting therapy," Don says. "When you get stung, your body produces cortisol. It reduces swelling, but it goes away. And you don't know when you're going to have that one reaction and go into anaphylactic shock and maybe drop dead. It's highly risky. You don't know where that bee has been. You don't know what proteins it's been getting."

"You're a helpful guy. Thank you."

"I would recommend hyaluronic acid. It's kind of expensive, about twenty-five dollars a month. But it works for some people. They make it out of rooster combs."

Somebody else asks about decongestants; a young woman inquires about the risk of birth defects while using a collagen stimulator. A preacher from the Abundant Life Church asks about drugs for a paralyzed vocal cord. ("When I do a sermon, it needs to last for thirty minutes.") Others stop by just to chat. Don, in addition to being the only pharmacist, is probably the most talkative and friendly person within four thousand square miles. The first time I visited his counter, he asked about my family, and I mentioned my newborn twin daughters. He filled a jar with thick brown ointment that he had recently compounded. "It's tincture of benzoin," he said. "Rodeo cowboys use it while riding a bull or a bronc. They put it on their hands; it makes the hands tacky. It's a respiratory stimulant, mostly used in wound care. You won't find anything better for diaper rash."

Cont. on enclosed insert

President's Message

Greetings RxPlus Members,

The RxPlus board and staff are totally committed to assist and support the stores in every way possible with the primary focus on store profits. We have many opportunities as well as challenges in the year ahead. In February, we will meet for Strategic Planning. We have begun monthly board conference calls to review action items and discuss follow up. These calls allow us to be more constructive and to review issues that will help the stores.

The Board of Directors would like to extend an invitation to RxPlus members to attend quarterly board meetings to give us new insight and ideas. If we could get up to three members at each meeting that would be great. Your board is always looking for new thoughts and ways to support the stores and enhance profitability. If anyone is interested in attending the next board meeting which will be in May, please call the office.

We have several topics to discuss at Strategic. One topic is 340B contracts, with the Board's goal to assist in negotiating these contracts and to advise of the obstacles that our colleagues have experienced. Another goal is succession planning to assist the stores in both selling and purchasing stores and most importantly to keep the stores independent. We will also begin evaluating managed care plans from our suppliers. One problem we will be trying to solve is the PBM abuse of MAC pricing.

The Vendor Committee continually works hard to negotiate the best contracts from our wholesalers.

We hope all of our member stores have a profitable and productive 2012.

Sincerely,
Joe Valdez
K.C. Owen
Co-Presidents
RxPlus Pharmacies

Executive Director's Message

Happy New Year! I hope everyone enjoyed the Holidays. It is hard to believe another year has gone by. We have been busy working on many issues this year and it does not appear the issues will be any less next year. Pharmacy is on a fast track of change that could be good or bad depending on our involvement. Community Pharmacy must work together, not just locally but on a national level to meet the needs of the changes headed our way. We need to have one united voice demanding the ear of our legislative branch both at the State and National level. We have been actively working with NCPA as well as other buying groups to help our members through these times. New York's Governor signed into law last month the "No Mandatory Mail Order" law which was hard fought not just in New York but across the country. This is not the answer to mail order but it was definitely a big win for community pharmacy. Brad will be asking for your help this year and we need to get everyone's support. We realize some are not comfortable contacting their legislators, but believe me when I say this is not an option. They will be far more likely to support constituents, particularly those who are in small business and supported by statewide organizations like RxPlus.

Next month our Board of Directors will meet for two days and work on our Strategic Plan for 2012/2013. If you have issues you believe we should be working on please let me know. The board works very hard all year long for you, and we need to be working on the issues you believe are important. You can give me a call or email me at grant@rxplus.com.

I look forward to working with all of you this year and hope to see everyone at our annual meeting to celebrate our 30 Year Anniversary!

Persistence is what makes the impossible possible, the possible likely, and the likely definite.

By Robert Half

Grant Kinn
Executive Director

GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS REPORT

Governmental Affairs Newsletter Update
By Brad Young

January 2012

Colorado Legislative Session Gets Under Way:

The Pharmacy Practice Act is up for Sunset Review this session. A bill must pass the legislature this year to continue the Board of Pharmacy. The Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA) has prepared a report that you can review on our web site under the News/Events tab in Topics in Pharmacy. The Report has 13 recommendations, most of which have little or no impact on independent pharmacies. We recommended that Colorado follow the lead of Oklahoma and put PBM regulation under the Board of Pharmacy, but DORA did not make the recommendation. Please take time to review the DORA report and let us know if you have any suggestions.

PBM Audit Bill may be introduced: RxPlus has met with Representative Janak Joshi (R-Colorado Springs) to see if he would be willing to sponsor a PBM audit bill, and he has agreed, pending approval from the Speaker of the House. House Republicans are generally opposed to additional laws that restrict the actions of private businesses, but Representative Joshi is a former physician who has first-hand experience with health insurance related audits.

Colorado Medicaid:

For the past year Colorado Medicaid has been working on the transition of payment methodology from AWP to Actual Acquisition Cost (AAC) and enhanced dispensing fee based on a Cost of Dispensing (COD) study. Medicaid staff has been meeting with representatives of the pharmacy community, including RxPlus, the Colorado Pharmacist's Society, and the chains. We have had two meetings with Medicaid and their contractor, Mercer, about the process of surveying pharmacies on the COD and the AAC process. One of the meetings was opened to input from pharmacists through a phone conference. Thanks to members who participated! Mercer and Medicaid have been open to our recommendation to date. We have obtained copies of the Mercer contract with the Department through the Colorado Open Records Act and have expressed concerns about some of the language. At this point they have agreed to review the contract and consider amending the language based on our recommendations. They also agreed to changes our attorney recommended to the Confidentiality Agreement they will be sending to RxPlus members.

At this point we are cautiously optimistic that the COD study and AAC survey will be performed honestly, but we will continue to be diligent in our review of their work. We pointed out at the December meeting that the Grant-Thornton (GT) COD study performed for NCPA and NACDS in 2007 has been very closely matched by COD studies performed by contractors for Medicaid departments in seven other states. Based on the GT study, the cost of dispensing in Colorado should be around \$13-\$14. We will keep you updated as the process continues.

Mark your Calendar

Wyoming Pharmacy
Association Winter CE
Wheatland, WY
Jan. 28

Alaska Pharmacy Association
Annual Convention
Anchorage, AK
Feb. 17-19

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 Tradeshow
San Diego, CA
Oct. 13-17



Governmental Affairs Newsletter Update Cont.

RxPlus Pharmacies, Inc.

3660 Wadsworth Blvd.
Wheat Ridge, CO 80033
Phone 303-463-4875
Fax 303-463-4880

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Staff

Grant Kinn
Executive Director

Kathy Muller
Director of Operations

Leah Frank
Accounting Manager

Mike Mitchell
Director of Business
Development

Brad Young
Director of Government
Affairs

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Federal Issues:

Senator Michael Bennet (D-CO) has signed a letter along with 13 other Senators expressing concerns about the CMS draft Federal Upper Limits (FULs) list for generic drugs. Please call Senator Bennet's office and thank him for his efforts. His D. C. phone number is (202) 224-5852.

ExpressScripts/Medco Merger:

NCPA urges you to "**Rally Your Patients to Fight the Express Scripts-Medco Merger.**" Download a bag stuffer to help your patients understand what's at stake in the proposed Express Scripts-Medco merger. The bag stuffer urges patients to contact the Federal Trade Commission." We have posted the link on the RxPlus web site for your convenience.

RxPlus Web Site:

Take a few minutes to check out our web site. We have posted some links to information we think you will find useful or interesting. On the home page you will find a link to the Colorado Medicaid MAC list. Issues and articles of interest, including a draft of the Mercer Cost of Dispensing survey form, can be found under the News/Events tab. For instance, there is a link to the featured article from The New Yorker about rural "druggist" Don Colcord in Nucla, links to Medicaid bulletins, and Mark Riley's DVD that exposes the Lies, Myths, and Deception of PBMs. **We hope to soon have a Classified section open to members only that will allow you to list products you have to sell to other RxPlus pharmacies.**

If you have suggested topics and links, please let us know!



Removing
the **MYSTERY** of
Returns

Tip #3 presented by EXP Pharmaceutical Services Corp

Did you know there are 25 manufacturer's whose Return Goods Policy dictates that credit may be given for a product that is returned prior to expiration but not after. This is contrary to the common understanding of returns in the marketplace. With EXP, you can attain a list of the 25 and by marking your shelves may ensure they are returned in a timely manner. EXP works for you to move items from waste into creditworthy status.

For more information contact us at sales@expworld.com.

