COVID-19: Providing Outpatient Pharmacy Services in a Field/Surge Hospital

APhA

Pharmacists engaged in supporting field and surge hospital operations during the COVID-19 response should also consider the value of providing outpatient pharmacy services in a temporary pharmacy facility or mobile pharmacy. The continuity of care and convenience that onsite pharmacies provide are of utmost importance during these unprecedented times. The following checklist was compiled by the pharmacy team at UNC Health and may be helpful when determining whether to provide outpatient pharmacy services in a field/surge hospital.

- Understand the types of temporary outpatient pharmacy services that could be established in a field/surge hospital.

  - > A temporary pharmacy facility is a facility that is established as a result of a public health emergency or state of emergency to temporarily provide pharmacy services within or adjacent to Declared Disaster Areas.

  - > A mobile pharmacy is a pharmacy that is self-propelled or movable by another vehicle that is self-propelled.

- Identify what types of pharmacy services are needed by the patients to be served.

  - > The types of services needed will be determined in consultation with emergency management officials/incident commanders. Services should be based on patient acuity and level of clinical services to be provided. Examples include:

    - ■ Dispensing. If dispensing services will be offered from the temporary pharmacy, consider what types of medications will be provided:

      - – Discharge medications only

      - – Limited formulary of acute and chronic medications

      - – Specific pharmaceutical classes (e.g., antibiotics, antivirals)

      - – Controlled substances

      - – Hazardous drugs

    - ■ Meds-to-beds. Consider who will be responsible for delivering medications to inpatients (pharmacy delivery vs. nurse pick-up).

    - ■ Nonsterile compounding. Determine the supplies required to be kept on hand and relevant compliance measures (e.g., USP standards).

    - ■ Additional services needed (e.g., immunizations, point-of-care testing, over-the-counter products, durable medical equipment).
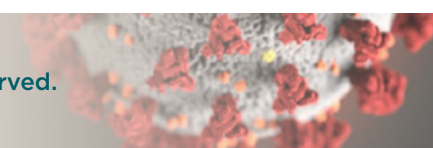
A Checklist of Considerations Shared by the Pharmacy Team at UNC Health

- Assess the availability of resources required to provide services.

Facility and Equipment	Supplies
■ Trailer or other securable physical location ■ Vehicle for transport to/from permanent location, if applicable ■ Access to a restroom ■ Security system ■ Benchtop/workspace ■ Chairs ■ Power supply ■ Refrigerator/freezer ■ Temperature-monitoring system ■ Sink and running water, hot and cold ■ Eyewash station ■ Safe/locked cabinet for controlled substances ■ Hazardous drug storage ■ Waste containers (e.g., trash can, hazardous pharmaceutical waste container, biohazard container) ■ Containers for protected health information waste	■ Medication inventory ■ Dispensing supplies (e.g., vials, labels, security bags, medication-counting supplies, scale) ■ Inventory log, with separate log for controlled substances ■ Will-call system (e.g., plastic bins) ■ Personal protective equipment (e.g., gloves, gowns, masks) ■ Hand sanitizer ■ Cleaning supplies ■ Floor markers ■ Signage ■ Printed standard operating procedures (SOPs)/policies
Telecommunication	**Technology**
■ Telephone (e.g., satellite phone, cell phone) ■ Network connectivity (e.g., satellite dish) ■ Fax/e-fax capability ■ Other communication devices (e.g., two-way radio) ■ HIPAA-compliant chat platform	■ Laptop computers ■ Pharmacy management system ■ Point-of-sale system (e.g., register, tablet, etc.) ■ Scanners ■ Label printer ■ Accounts-receivable interface ■ Prescription Drug Monitoring Program interface ■ 340B accumulator interface, if needed

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- If a temporary or mobile pharmacy is to be established, consider the following sample component steps required to provide services at the temporary pharmacy.

  > Consider local, state, and federal state of emergency-related orders.

  > Obtain State Board of Pharmacy approval for a temporary pharmacy facility or mobile pharmacy.

  > Contact the Drug Enforcement Administration if controlled substances will be dispensed.

  > Source and aggregate resources required to establish the temporary location.

  > Modify and/or develop relevant SOPs.

  > Based on infrastructure and resources available, determine how patients will receive the medications filled at the outpatient temporary or mobile pharmacy, such as through delivery to nursing station or bedside or patient walk-up.

  > Train staff on SOPs for temporary location.

  > Set hours of operation and staff scheduling, with special consideration for:

    - Length of shifts

    - Number of staff trained to staff temporary location

    - Fixed or rotating staffing assignments

    - Access to a break area for meals

    - Availability of alternate sources of services after hours (if not a 24-hour operation)

- If a temporary or mobile pharmacy **WILL NOT** be established, determine how patients serviced by the field/surge hospital will receive prescribed medications. Consider infrastructure and resources available, as well as continuity of care and patient convenience. Examples include:

  > Prescription orders filled at an existing, permanent outpatient pharmacy and couriered to the field/surge hospital for delivery to the nursing station or bedside;

  > Offered by home delivery or curbside pick-up at an existing, permanent outpatient pharmacy;

  > Outsourced to a local community pharmacy for fulfillment with bedside delivery by onsite pharmacy or nursing staff; or

  > Outsourced to an independent or chain community pharmacy for patient pick-up.

A Checklist of Considerations Shared by the Pharmacy Team at UNC Health

Additional Resources and References

- NABP Model Act
- FEMA Pharmacy Team Resource Typing
- Veterans Affairs Emergency Pharmacy Services

Resource Developed and Shared by

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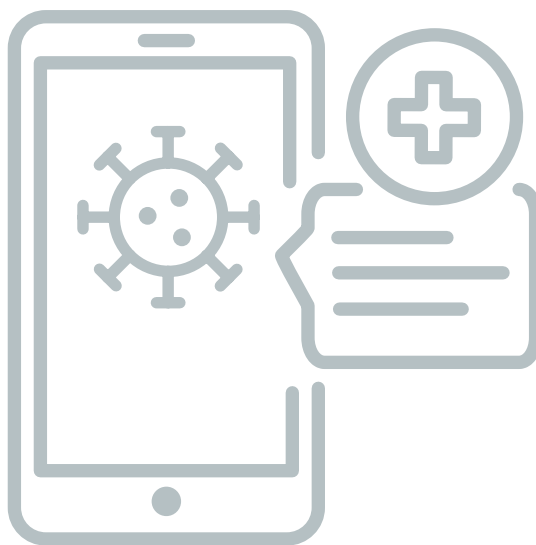
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