

Star Measures Success: Moundsville Pharmacy



Jason Turner, PharmD

Pharmacy Name:

Moundsville Pharmacy

Community Type:

Rural community with a population of about 10,000 with the county, Marshall County, having a population of about 35,000. We are right along the Ohio River, so there are river communities every 2-5 miles along the main highway – Route 2.

Location Setting:

Free standing

Patient Base:

High Medicare population

Primary Objective:

Our goal is to control 60% of our workflow with Syncs so we can schedule processing, production and pharmacist verification. We're striving to schedule clinical services on non-sync days and improve and expand delivery efficiencies. Most importantly, we want to improve patient adherence, patient health and decrease patient risks. Ultimately, we hope to see all of this have a positive impact on the way we are viewed by third parties by having Top 20% star ratings.

For many independent community pharmacies, CMS Star Ratings represent a tide of change that can be overwhelming. But it doesn't have to be that way. AmerisourceBergen customer and *Good Neighbor Pharmacy* owner/ pharmacist Jason Turner of Moundsville Pharmacy in Moundsville, WV, found a way to improve both quality of care for patients and performance on Star measures by making changes to the pharmacy workflow with a medication synchronization program. And he's sharing his tips for success with other pharmacies in a big way.

Jason's journey to Star success started in 2013, when he attended a buying group meeting at which Dr. David Nau spoke about Star Ratings. Although Jason knew what Star Ratings were, it was this Continuing Education session that spurred him to take action. "I really responded to it and embraced the idea," says Jason. "I realized this was the direction insurance plans were going to start moving and that medication adherence was more than I'd originally thought."

At the time, Moundsville Pharmacy had already implemented a medication synchronization program, Pharmacy Development Services' SyncRX. And while only a small number of patients were yet enrolled, Jason saw growing the program as an opportunity to accomplish a number of objectives. Not only would SyncRX help the pharmacy improve its performance on Star adherence measures, but it would also enable the store to increase operational efficiencies and patient service while managing inventory costs.

With these goals in mind, Jason and the Moundsville team took the original SyncRX program and "put it on steroids," developing policies and procedures that built in accountability to make sure patients didn't fall through the cracks. And after

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Dr. Nau's talk, the store signed on to start using the EQUIPP™ platform to monitor their Star Ratings performance. Jason and team set a goal of having 300-400 patients enrolled in the SyncRX program by December 2013. Upon achieving that milestone, Jason set his eyes on even bigger success, evolving the program into what is now known as SyncRX+ to include Medication Therapy Review (MTR) processes. This added layer of processes allows the pharmacy to identify opportunities for improving both patient care and Star Ratings as pharmacists reviewed patient cases on a quarterly basis. These reviews focus on eight questions that cover high-risk medications and adherence issues, as well as additional opportunities to make the patient healthier and increase sales through initiatives such as immunization programs, diabetic services and over-the-counter product sales.

Moundsville's success with SyncRX+ was so impressive that, in 2014, upon evaluating improvements over a 10-month period and presenting the data to PDS, a partnership was born. Jason now co-markets and co-licenses the program with PDS and has conducted two live sessions to train other pharmacies on implementing the program in their stores.

For Moundsville Pharmacy, the criteria for identifying a synchronization-eligible patient is fourfold. Jason recommends looking at:

- Patients with multiple prescriptions
- Patients who routinely have prescriptions delivered
- Patients on high-cost/special order medications
- Patients who have expressed frustration over lack of refills, incomplete orders, owed medications or multiple pharmacy visits

"Based on these four rules, there's really nobody who doesn't fit," says Jason. "We started enrolling anyone who was interested, and the patients love it."



Jason's team starts working on synchronization program refills early enough that they can resolve any payer or provider refill issues without having to owe the patient partial medication. Once a month, a synchronization team member calls SyncRX patients to make sure there have been no changes to medication and ask about non-synchronized medications and supplies such as inhalers, syringes and allergy medications. Moundsville also offers free delivery to enrolled patients.

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The key to success for SyncRX or any program, Jason says, is a change in workflow. The Moundsville store has a designated area for synchronization filling, with labels printed and refills counted separately so as not to congest or create additional stress on the stores day-to-day workflow. Jason emphasizes that this separation allows a dedicated team to work quickly and efficiently in a quiet area. “On the day-to-day workflow side,” he says, “they’re cleared of all the stress of baskets of eight to 12 prescriptions coming down, and those patients waiting in the pharmacy get more timely service and more time with the pharmacist. When you think about implementing synchronization, you have to think about changing your workflow.”

Jason emphasizes the importance of training and ownership — taking the time to learn the implementation steps that will enable a pharmacy to run an effective synchronization workflow. “I learn best when I take myself out of my environment and give myself time to think and learn,” he says. “And when you do that and put yourself among your peers, you figure out so much about your business that you’d never figure out if you sat at your desk.”

Identifying who will own and run the implementation process — and empowering that individual to do so — is also critical. Moundsville’s synchronization program is fully driven by a pharmacy technician, in whom Jason puts complete trust. He encourages other pharmacies to do the same, and then see how their businesses can benefit from the impact of motivation and ownership of invested technicians and a fully trained team that believes in the program.

What does the new workflow look like for Moundsville? The team is finding that they do almost 50 percent of their prescription volume for the week on Mondays, one of the days dedicated to synchronization work. On Tuesdays, it’s nearly 25 percent. And Wednesday through Friday is focused on clinical services such as Medication Therapy Management (MTM) and MTRs that help the store improve on high-risk medication and diabetic measures.

These workflow adjustments have paid off, too. In addition to the cost and staffing efficiencies gained and the potential for bonus payments, Moundsville steadily moved up into the top 20 percent of its region’s five-star performers on adherence measures. And as for the two clinical measures, the MTR component of SyncRX+ helped immensely in allowing the store to complete more cases effectively through Mirixa and Outcomes. And Jason is intently focused on staying at the top. “I think as we move forward, adherence programs will become the status quo,” he says. “Right now, Moundsville has a competitive advantage because we have a synchronization program. But a year or two from now, this won’t be a competitive advantage. For the sake of our patients hopefully one day we’ll all be five-stars.”

The bottom line for Jason and Moundsville? Understanding EQuIPP scores is one thing. Knowing how to change those scores means knowing where to start. And it all starts with the right face-to-face training.

“You can’t get that from a manual,” says Jason. “You can use any program you want to. What matters is that you truly understand it.”