

Flu Fundamentals: Planning for a Successful Flu Year

For community pharmacies, flu is not just a “season” that begins in October and runs through mid-Winter, instead flu is a year-long event that requires considerable planning. Pharmacists must begin implementing their flu plans now in order to be proactive and get ahead of their competition.

Here are 5 tips on how pharmacies can prepare for a successful, stress free flu year.

Tip 1: Pre-Order Flu Vaccines & High Dose

The time to pre-order flu vaccines is NOW. Most pre-order dates end March 31st or the beginning of April. It is best to order as soon as possible especially if you want to guarantee the best pricing, availability, preferred delivery dates, and avoid market shortages (which have happened in years past.)



Pharmacies also need to be ordering High Dose if they are not already doing so. For instance, 78% of Seniors 65+ are now receiving High Dose Flu Vaccine at retail pharmacies since the vaccine is covered by Medicare Part B. This is a growing category for retail pharmacy, and pharmacists need to take advantage of their position in the marketplace.

Tip 2: Don't Forget Ancillary Items

Not only do you need the vaccines for a successful flu operation, but you also need to make sure your pharmacy is equipped with gloves, masks, alcohol wipes, band aids, etc. Make sure to stock up on lots of these supplementary items and keep them on hand for easy access.

Tip 3: Spread the Word with Signage

Banners, social media messages, patient bag stuffers, etc. No matter which route you take it is vital to get the word out to your patients that your pharmacy offers flu shots. Most vaccine companies will also provide you with free store signage you can download and utilize. Window signs can also catch the attention of the possible passerby.

Tip 4: Utilize Pharmacy Technology

Do you have an IVR or an outbound calling or texting platform? If so, make sure to take advantage of the messages you can pre-record that lets patients know your vaccines are in. Make sure to have them setup an appointment as well. You can also utilize your pharmacy management system to identify the patients who received a flu shot last year and do a direct marketing campaign to those individuals by sending a personalized text.

Tip 5: Offer an Incentive

Who doesn't love a special enticement! Make sure to offer your patients a small gift card, free vitamins, or even a sticker that says, "I got the flu shot!" Pro tip: take a picture of your patients wearing their sticker (with their consent) and post these photos to your social media pages. People like to be rewarded for their time and something as small as a sticker or being featured on a social media page makes people feel appreciated.

Closing Thoughts

Preparing your pharmacy and staff for flu can be time consuming. Vaccinating pharmacies need to secure inventory by placing flu orders, start educating and training staff to talk to patients about the importance of receiving a flu shot, and prep marketing materials to get the message out. If you take the right steps and put these tips into action your pharmacy will succeed this flu year and beyond, all the while increasing your bottom line and bettering patient outcomes.

Not sure where to start? Through our partnership with Aspire Health Pharmacy Services, Keystone has all the solutions to help your pharmacy succeed and have a successful flu year. To learn more about our services and discounted flu offerings, connect with your Keystone Sales Rep via phone 215-464-9892 or email info@kpparx.com.