

HRSA Agency Report to PharmPAC
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Telepharmacy Rescues Drug Stores, Improves Health Care and Creates Jobs in North Dakota Towns

In North Dakota, a HRSA grant supports telepharmacies at 48 remote sites, the high-tech approach has helped retail pharmacies stay afloat, brought pharmacy services to more than 40,000 small town residents, and created more than 60 jobs. The grant project started to reverse the trend in 2002, its first year, when North Dakota's first ten telepharmacies set up shop.

What does a telepharmacy look like? No different from your average drug store. Often set up in corner stores that went out of business, they sell over-the-counter medications and consumer goods typically found in regular pharmacies. But their pharmacists may be miles away, connected to the sites by computer conferencing technology, and the efficiencies they achieve can make it possible for small towns to keep their drug stores open – and their residents supplied with the medications they need.

Today, registered pharmacy technicians at the 72 sites in drug stores and small rural hospitals use audio-video software and high-resolution digital cameras to share information with pharmacists at 24 central "hubs" around the state. Using the cameras, the technicians show pharmacists the physician-signed prescription, the stock bottle where the pills are stored, and the computer-generated label on the container the patient will take home.

"Pharmacists watch and talk to the technicians as they fill prescriptions," said Dr. Charles Peterson, dean of North Dakota State University's College of Pharmacy and the project's director. "They can see the script label clearly, even zoom in and ID-code the tablet, or watch the 'splash-and pour' of the technician, who stays online – all in real time."

Once a prescription is approved, the patient is taken to a private room – where a camera and monitor are set up – to participate in a mandatory consultation with the pharmacist. "The North Dakota model of telepharmacy actually keeps the health professional in charge of the health care, using good oversight and good professional judgment," Dr. Peterson said.

With the results in from North Dakota, telepharmacy is catching on in other places. Alaska, Idaho, Illinois, Montana, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Wyoming and even the entirely urban District of Columbia have all changed their pharmacy laws to allow it. Since a rules revision in 2004, North Dakota allows for hospital telepharmacy as well.

HRSA Launches Online Resource to Help Prevent Poisonings

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) released a new online tool to raise awareness of ways to prevent poisonings across the United States. HRSA Administrator Mary K. Wakefield, Ph.D., R.N., unveiled the [Poison Prevention Week Planner](#) March 17 at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., in conjunction with National Poison Prevention Week, March 15-21.

The downloadable planner features useful information on how communities can work with local poison centers to implement prevention activities. The planner also gives tips for promoting events with media and through community outreach. HRSA also has released a new brochure, "Safe Medicine Use & Poison Prevention Tips – A Guide for Older Adults and Caregivers." Older adults are more likely than others to die from poisonings as a result of therapeutic errors.

During last year's Prevention Week, HRSA unveiled the online Poison Help Campaign (PoisonHelp.hrsa.gov) to inform Americans about the Poison Help number (1-800-222-1222), which connects callers to their local poison control centers, where nurses, pharmacists and other poison experts answer the call. The campaign also contained media ads and bilingual radio jingles for use by local media and community groups.

HRSA's Poison Control Program funds the Poison Help number and provides support and enhancement grants to the poison centers. National Poison Prevention Week is sponsored by the National Poison Prevention Week Council, of which HRSA is a member.

Each year, the nation's 61 poison centers field calls on more than 2 million possible poisonings; 93 percent of poisonings occur in the home.

2009 National ADAP Monitoring Project Annual Report

AIDS Drug Assistance Programs (ADAPs), authorized under the Ryan White Program, are the Nation's prescription drug safety-net for people living with HIV in the United States. A new report presents the most current and comprehensive look at ADAP programs, including key trends over time, challenges facing ADAPs, and the reemergence of waiting lists for enrollment in some States. The report is based on a survey of ADAPs in the 50 States, the District of Columbia, Territories, and associated jurisdictions. View the report and summary at: <http://nastad.org/>.

HIV Vaccine Awareness Day: May 18

Despite much research, there still is not a vaccine for HIV. This awareness day provides an opportunity to thank the thousands of people who are working to help find an HIV preventive vaccine, including clinical trial volunteers, health professionals, community members, and the researchers. For more information and resources go to: <http://hhs.gov/aidsawarenessdays/days/vaccine/index.html>.

HRSA Officers – May Brown Bag Session

The next brown bag session will be held on Wednesday, May 13, 2009, 12 noon - 1:00 pm EST. This month's topic of discussion will be Officer Profiles/Direct Access. For further information please contact CAPT Raelene Skerda via email at rskerda@hrsa.gov or 301-443-2741.

