

Volunteering at Reach Out's Bettman Charitable Pharmacy in Dayton, Ohio

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When I was promoted to a district manager role for my company last fall, one of my biggest reservations was that I would be stepping away from the bench only five years after becoming a pharmacist. I spent six years in pharmacy school to become a community pharmacist; something that I had wanted to do since I was

16-years-old. I was so involved with my patients' healthcare in my store, and in creating and testing new clinical programs to better their outcomes. Accepting this promotion might mean that I lose the one piece of my job that brought me the most joy every day: interacting with my patients. Or so I thought...

I had heard about a free clinic pharmacy called Reach Out in Dayton, Ohio from a fellow pharmacist, so I decided to contact their director and see if there might be an opportunity to volunteer. I was hesitant to take on yet another time commitment, but when the director contacted me and said that the volunteer hours are from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., usually once a month, I knew it would be the perfect fit for my schedule. I also learned a little history about the pharmacy as well.

In January 2006, the Reach Out Pharmacy was awarded the very first Charitable Pharmacy License in the State of Ohio and its doors opened on March 10, 2006. On November 15, 2016, Bettman Charitable Pharmacy was dedicated in honor of Joe Bettman, R.Ph. who served on the west side of Dayton for 56 years. The mission of Bettman Charitable Pharmacy is to provide pharmaceutical assistance to the uninsured/underinsured population of Montgomery County.

My first day shadowing, I learned the simple dispensing system and the limited formulary they carry as the medications are either donated samples or discounted from the wholesalers. It was quite a bit different from the state-of-the-art sys-



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tems and large inventory I was used to in my store. And, of course, being a free clinic means there is no cash register to run or point-of-sale system to check them out. Another unique aspect is that the pharmacy is inside the clinic. So rather than having to call an office and wait to speak with a nurse or physician for clarification or a clinical question, I can simply walk across the hall and speak with them face-to-face. Better yet, they usually come to me first to ask what they can prescribe for a patient. It's a really unique experience that fosters great interprofessional relationships. There are also lots of students, both medical and pharmacy, who rotate through and it's great for them to see that interaction early in their training.

As for the patients, it's so rewarding to get to speak with them and counsel them on the medications we dispense. There are no controlled substances. It is almost entirely chronic disease medications for diabetes, hypertension, cholesterol, and mental health, with the occasional acute antibiotic or topical cream dispensed. These patients have limited resources, so any small lifestyle interventions that they can make will complement the medications they receive. Adherence can be a challenge. Although most of them come back for refills at the clinic, sometimes we don't have the medication they need on our formulary and they may have to utilize other pharmacies which can fragment their care. There are also many Spanish-speaking patients, and thankfully there are volunteer translators at Reach Out too.

In my years as a community pharmacist, I had an interest in caring for underserved patients, and I was grateful to work in a place that made it easier for patients to afford their medications. Volunteering at Reach Out has taken this interest and turned it into a passion. Even though I may not be on the bench every day now, I live vicariously through my team of pharmacists and encourage them to look at each patient holistically and find out what barriers they have to adherence. And each day of the month that I volunteer at Reach Out, I use it as an opportunity to keep my clinical acumen up-to-date, my dispensing skills sharpened, and my passion for patient care in the forefront of what I do each day as a healthcare leader.

To learn more about Reach Out and the Bettman Charitable Pharmacy, visit <http://daytonreachout.org/pharmacy.html>.