

Pharmaceutical Supply Chain Holding Up
By Paul McGraw

From the early onset of Covid-19 in the U.S. there were concerns with the ability of the U.S. supply chain to hold up to the increased demand by both consumers and healthcare professionals. While some of the concerns were a bit more comedy than a concern – the run on toilet paper for example – the ability of healthcare providers to stock up on supplies that may or may not be needed based on the level of care required was a priority for many of us in the healthcare industry. The reality is, not having something when it's needed in healthcare just isn't an option. And while there were some shortages of personal protective equipment, which were widely reported, one aspect of the U.S. healthcare distribution network that held up amazingly well was the pharmaceutical distribution network.

As a cash only provider of affordable, quality, healthcare that operates outside of insurance networks and with much less overhead, our clinics (located in Darien, Brookfield and Janesville) rely on the ability not only to be cost competitive but also to be able to provide a one-stop-shop for non-emergency medical care for our patients. Whether it's primary care, physical therapy, urgent care, radiology or dispensing of prescription medication, our business model requires that we are able to provide services when our patients need them. As such, being stocked and ready to serve our patients is a necessity – or the reality is that they will just go elsewhere. Despite concerns broadly in the industry, our three southern Wisconsin clinics never experienced prescription medication shortages or unusual delays due to Covid-19. That's a theme we saw and heard around the area – our prescription medication supply chain held up under the pressure of a national pandemic.

While medication shortage concerns still seem to linger publicly, behind the scenes we have little concern. It's clear that the pharmaceutical supply chain, from manufacturers to the pharmaceutical distributors, has adapted to increasing demands and met those demands. Thankfully pharmaceutical distributors operate a complex system to ensure that medications get to where they need to be. Whether it's clinics like ours, larger healthcare networks or local pharmacies, the distribution network has shown an ability to adapt, innovate and overcome the concerns. While there is much our state and country need to address right now, we can all be glad to know that the distribution chain for medicine has not missed a beat.

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