

## Four Seasons Nursing and Rehabilitation Center takes visionary step to become first long-term care facility in New York to have an automated in-house pharmacy

### Challenge

Historically serviced by an off-site vendor pharmacy, Four Seasons' management team considered opening an automated in-house pharmacy to expand market share, support safe, accurate and timely administration of medications while controlling pharmaceutical costs.

### Solution

The AmerisourceBergen Technology Group's FastPak® EXP solution enabled Four Seasons Nursing and Rehabilitation Center to open an in-house pharmacy with the additional benefit of improved safety, flexibility and accuracy.

### Result

Four Seasons experienced additional revenue, less medical errors, enhanced patient care and reduced costs.

Saves costs and increases market share by implementing technology to improve patient care, decrease medication errors and redirect valuable nursing resources

### Situation

Four Seasons Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Brooklyn, NY is a 270-bed facility offering specialized programs in long-term care, short-term rehabilitation, certified ventilator services, on-site dialysis center, hospice, home care, respite and an adult day health care program and the first long-term care facility to implement a complete electronic health record. Historically serviced by an off-site vendor pharmacy, Caroline Rich, the Administrator at Four Seasons had a vision to expand its market share and improve patient care with an in-house pharmacy that could not only better serve its residents, but could also benefit onsite populations such as time-pressed employees, adult day program participants and the urgent care center located in the same building.

### Challenge

Jonathan Shaatal, R.PH, MS, Director of Pharmacy, was recruited to create, open and manage the new pharmacy. His first step? To move from a vendor supported punch card system to an automated medication packaging system with compliance packaging that clearly labels each cycle fill medication according to the time of administration. This new system doesn't rely on the pharmacist or technician to manually fill the prescription; rather it relies on state-of-the-art technology that pulls prescription information directly from the electronic patient profile system into the automated medication packaging system. "This switch would increase medication safety for our

elderly residents who are at a greater risk of side effects from medication misadventures," explained Shaatal. "It would also streamline the supply chain process for better efficiency, inventory control and oversight."

Four Seasons also wanted to maximize reimbursement for Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Plans, the main prescription coverage plan for its residents.

### Solution

After extensively researching automation options at various tradeshows, Shaatal decided to implement AmerisourceBergen Technology Group's FastPak® EXP solution, widely recognized as the most flexible automated packaging and barcoding system in the industry. In fact, the FastPak EXP received the highest overall performance rating in the KLAS 2008 High Volume Unit Dose Packaging Report.

For Shaatal, the FastPak EXP system offered a number of advancements over other packaging systems, not the least of which was the accuracy of the software linking to National Drug Codes, the ability to be paperless, and that the canisters can be replaced and recalibrated (when a less expensive drug becomes available) at a significantly lower cost than competitors.



AmerisourceBergen's automation system provides cost-effective compliance packaging solutions for customized long-term home care patient services

*"Ultimately our entire operation is enhanced—from increased market share, additional revenue and cost savings, to a better environment for both our residents and employees."*

—Jonathan Shaatal,  
Director of Pharmacy,  
Four Seasons Nursing and  
Rehabilitation Center

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The FastPak EXP, which fills about 300 prescriptions a day at Four Seasons, also enabled safe, accurate and timely administration of medications, while at the same time helping to control pharmaceutical costs. "This system eliminates the need for missing medications, borrowing of medications and the associated duplicative ordering fees," said Shaatal.

The efficiency of the automation system has allowed Four Seasons pharmacy to operate with only four employees – a director, an assistant director, a technician and a pharmacy aide. Four Seasons plans to maintain this streamlined staff and continue to save on labor costs.

Additionally, since the automated system allows for reduced nursing medication administration time, nursing staff have more time to focus on resident's quality of life, patient care and completion of necessary regulatory documentation.

While there was an initial investment to implement the new technology, Caroline Rich said, "The capital expenditure has been worth it, since it allowed us to run a pharmacy more efficiently than we ever could have dreamed of. Using 'right-sized staffing,' reductions in medication errors and the elimination of missing medications, the technology has paid for itself very quickly." Building on the new system, two years later Four Seasons piloted a point-of-entry

barcoding system of medication administration for patient bedside scanning which was fully supported by the FastPak EXP. The nursing staff has responded positively to the new feature and employee surveys indicate increased overall worker satisfaction.

Four Seasons' in-house pharmacy is a critical sales tool as well, giving prospective residents and their families an increased sense of well-being. "When we tell our prospects during their initial tour that we have an in-house pharmacy with compliance packaging and a barcoding system, it assures them that the right resident will be taking the right medication, at the right time with the right dose. This significantly differentiates us from our competitors," said Shaatal.

Additionally, in his role as president of the New York Directors of Pharmacy for Long-term Care, Shaatal is promoting the in-house pharmacy model to its 30 member facilities, giving tours of the Four Seasons' operation. "Every pharmacist who tours our pharmacy is very impressed and anxious to explore how it could work at their facility. While they can become intimidated by the idea of technology changes, I try to help them realize taking the leap will help them operate more efficiently. Automation is truly the future of long-term-care pharmacy."

## The Result

**Automation brings a level of sophistication to the in-house pharmacy at Four Seasons Nursing and Rehabilitation Center and delivers significant benefits:**

- **Additional revenue by offering pharmacy services to ready populations**
- **Labor cost savings by maintaining "right-sized staffing"**
- **Enhanced patient care and compliance with regulatory documentation has lead to higher reimbursement**
- **Reduction of medical errors and increased patient safety**
- **Eliminated medication borrowing and duplicative fees**
- **Decreased medication administration time for nursing staff by 40 percent**
- **The greater efficiency as a result of automation has lead to more quality time spent with the Resident**
- **Enhanced employee benefits by offering onsite pharmacy services**