

# REVVED AND READY TO USE DRIVE-THRU?

## If it's at Medical Arts, there are KEYS for success

By MaryAnne Pankhurst

Vroom, vroom. From coffee, to donuts, banking and dry cleaning, we live in a drive-thru world. Do you know you can even get married in a drive-thru? It's true, but only in Las Vegas.

So if drive-thru is so common, why did *Medical Arts Pharmacy* pull down its drive-thru sign at 13th St. last week and put up one that says **One Hour Rx**? Don't pharmacists just count pills, slap on a label and hand it out the window?

"That's a widely held misperception," says pharmacist Harry Haramis. "We have computer technology and technicians to count pills."

Haramis explains that changing the drive-thru sign was a business decision based on evidence from pharmacies and customers all over North America. It turns out drive-thru has proved a bit of a misnomer and in certain situations can cause undo stress on both pharmacists and customers.

"Pharmacy services are individualized," Haramis says, adding that businesses best suited for drive-thru are those that have standardized products – like donuts – that require no instructions for use.

"You can imagine that helping a person learn to inject their insulin, measure their blood sugar, or use an asthma inhaler means face-to-face discussion is essential," says Haramis, "And these are situations where coming inside the pharmacy is important. However, if you've been using your insulin or your inhaler for a long time, picking it up at the window is perfectly fine."

In other words, a pharmacy drive-thru is best suited for:

- **Dropping off new prescriptions, or**
- **Picking up one's regular prescriptions.**

That's why the service has been renamed **One Hour Rx**. It means that rather than waiting at the window, customers must return at the appropriate time.

But does that mean it takes longer to get a drive-thru prescription filled? The answer is No.

"All prescriptions are treated equally," says Haramis. "Our goal with **One Hour Rx** is simply to help manage customer expectations so people aren't frustrated by having to sit in their cars in a line up outside the window."

And this is because there are many steps involved in preparing a prescription, as well as many people and technologies employed along the way.

Some of the steps that require a pharmacist's expertise involve:

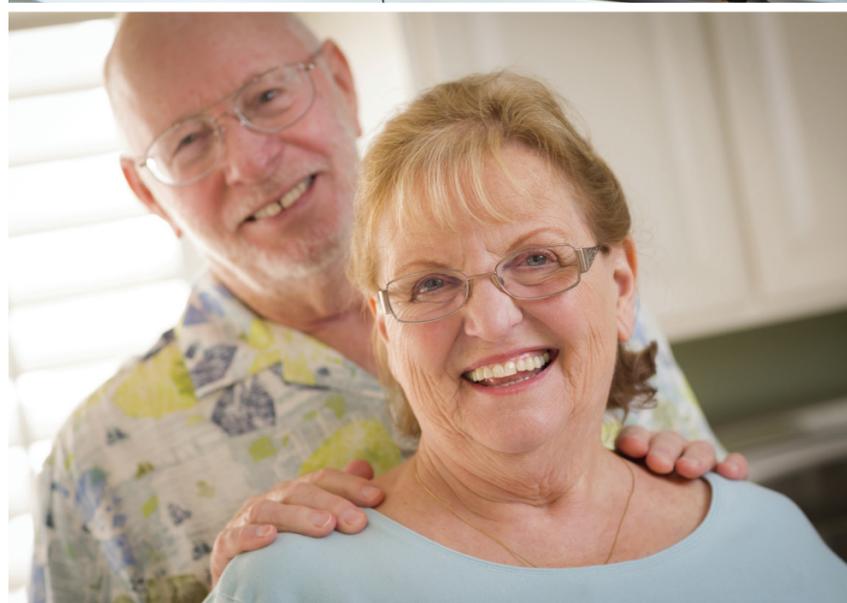
- **Translating the doctor's orders (drug, dose, timing etc.),**
- **Reviewing the person's computerized medication history,**
- **Assessing whether there are any drug allergies or drug interactions,**
- **Investigating whether special packaging is required, and**
- **Determining whether the medication is covered by insurance or paid for by the government.**

Bottom line, says Haramis, a pharmacist's role is to ensure the best and safest use of medication, and quality takes time.



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The findings of a study out of Ohio's College of Pharmacy (led by Sheryl L. Szeinbach, PhD) help *Medical Arts Pharmacy*-owners Harry Haramis, Josée Lemay and Suzie Pilon confirm that the drive-thru issues they observe are universal.

Specifically, the pharmacists conclude that the fast food model of drive-thru is not realistic or ideal for healthcare services that demand face-to-face care. However, the pharmacists continue to believe that the convenience of dropping off "new" and picking up "refilled" prescriptions will continue to help many people, particularly those with mobility problems.

The **One Hour Rx** innovation is not only the first of its kind in North America, but an example of a Cornwall Ontario-born business solution.

The pharmacists will share this innovation with university-level business and pharmacy academics in the coming year.