



The doctor and pharmacist will see you now

A Village Medical physician and Walgreens pharmacy manager prove that sharing really is caring, as they collaborate to serve the community at a new clinic in Scottsdale, Ariz.

By: Brittany Kruk, 2/23/2021

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You've come to a fork in the road and must choose your path. You're presented with two options: on the left is Walgreens, and on the right, a Village Medical primary care clinic.

But why choose one when you can have both?

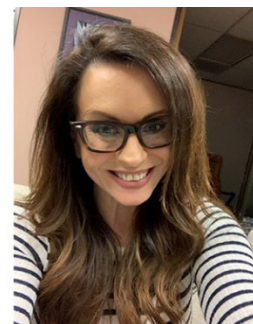
In these new, co-located spaces, patients benefit from being able to receive care from an experienced primary care physician as well as a trusted Walgreens pharmacy team under one roof. The two work together toward one common goal: improving medication adherence and health outcomes for the good of their patients. What a patient might not see is the constant collaboration happening behind the scenes that results in a seamless experience.

This collaboration [began in 2019](#) with a successful five-store trial in Houston, and in December 2020, the companies [announced plans](#) to open the next 40 full-service primary care clinics in Texas, Arizona and Florida by the end of summer 2021. Most recently, Walgreens Boots Alliance [announced](#) an acceleration of its investment in [VillageMD](#) to support the opening of 600 to 700 Village Medical at Walgreens primary care clinics in more than 30 U.S. markets within the next four years, with the intent to build hundreds more thereafter.

Village Medical's Dr. Jared Berkowitz and Walgreens pharmacy manager Christina Jenner, PharmD, are two of the leading providers at one of the newest locations in Scottsdale, Ariz. Shortly after the clinic's grand opening, *Walgreens Stories* talks with the pair to find out how this unique model is working in real time.



Dr. Jared Berkowitz
Physician, Village Medical at Walgreens



Christina Jenner
Pharmacy manager, Walgreens

When did you first learn you'd be working at this new space?

Dr. Jared Berkowitz: While I was interviewing with VillageMD several months ago, I learned that Walgreens and VillageMD had completed some trials in Houston, and the results they had in quality

metrics, medication adherence and patient satisfaction were exceptional. Eventually, the site I was offered to visit was a new Village Medical practice. I was able to see firsthand how the experienced physicians and experienced pharmacy teams work together to improve medication adherence and patient outcomes. That was something that resonated with me as a physician.

Christina Jenner, PharmD: I first learned about it in July 2020 when my supervisor came in and had a discussion with the store manager and me about Village Medical coming into our store. I was excited about it because this collaborative effort benefits outcomes for patients, which is really a great thing to be able to do.

You've both previously worked in models that have been traditionally independent. What would you say are the benefits of being on one team?

Berkowitz: In previous models, communication was difficult because pharmacists were offsite and are very busy in general. There wasn't always time to ask questions or time for all parties to be involved in improving patient care. Now that we're under the same roof, we've got a tremendous amount of resources at our disposal. One of them is a shared electronic medical record (EMR) system, which helps reduce the risk of hospital readmission and improve communication for our high-risk patients who were recently admitted to the hospital to keep them out and keep them healthier. Another benefit is that many of these practices will be in medically underserved areas, helping provide high-level, value-based care to a variety of patients who may not have access to healthcare and are at greater risk of health disparities.

Jenner: It's extremely helpful. I was most excited about having the ability to use a joint EMR, which allows us to make determinations about what's going on with a patient. No matter what the issue is, we have complete access to get in touch with Dr. Berkowitz and the other physicians through the text messaging functionality of the EMR. Being in one space also allows us to discuss changes or additions to a patient's medication regimen and resolve problems much faster.

How does this offering meet the unique needs of the patients in the Scottsdale community?

Berkowitz: We have a high Medicare population, and oftentimes, these patients have complex medical histories and really benefit from having pharmacy consultations. One of the things we're able to assist them with is through Walgreens' [Save a Trip Refills program](#), which allows for all their medications to be filled at the same time to reduce repeat trips to the pharmacy and improve medication adherence.

Jenner: I've generally heard that people in our community are really happy we're here. There are some apartment complexes that are close by, and a lot of those residents are very interested because they can just walk across our parking lot and go right in.

Tell me more about how you interact day to day.

Berkowitz: We have biweekly meetings with our pharmacy team to discuss the complexities of our patients who need a higher level of care. We also discuss any workflow issues that we might need to fine tune. As Christina mentioned, our EMR allows us to communicate back and forth through patient-secure, HIPAA-compliant text messaging. We can walk with a patient over to the pharmacy and have a conversation with both the pharmacist and the patient if it's something we may not know the answer to, but that the pharmacist can help with.

Jenner: And in the time between our team huddles, Dr. Berkowitz and rest of his team meet with our store manager to make sure they don't have any functionality or operations issues. When the patient comes into Village Medical, they get checked in and then they go to the room. When they leave, patients have the convenient option to head directly to the pharmacy if they'd like. We can give them their prescriptions and help answer any questions together. For patients who choose to use Walgreens, Village Medical sends over prescriptions electronically to us, which come in as "waiters" in our system and are prioritized to be filled right away. We get to meet and talk with the patients, especially if they're new to our pharmacy. We've had a lot of people inquiring about Village Medical, so we've also been walking them over to meet with the receptionist to get more information.



How have patients reacted to the clinic so far?

Berkowitz: In the short time we've been open here, we've had several patients comment on how convenient it is for them to walk down the hallway to get their medications, and to have their medication refills prioritized if they choose to get them refilled at the Walgreens pharmacy. They also like the comfort of knowing that if they have a question or concern about their medications, there's a pharmacist nearby in addition to the physician. When patients adhere to an appropriate care and medication regime, their health outcomes improve and they benefit.

Jenner: A lot of people are really impressed with the use of the space of Village Medical. They think the design and architecture of the clinic is just beautiful. They love the layout. They love how we were able to take the store and convert it into a very modern medical office. They love the rooms, they love the employees. I had a couple who I was doing vaccinations for the other day say, "We just signed up to make them our primary care physicians. They're so fabulous." It's been all positive reviews.

What excites you most when you think about the potential of the WBA and VillageMD partnership?

Berkowitz: The opportunity for all of us to collaborate and communicate for the benefit of the patient is so incredible. Christina and her team have been just as excited as we are. And while it benefits our patients, it's also an opportunity for us to learn from each other and look for ways to improve efficiency in real time. At the end of the day, the ultimate goal is to improve patient outcomes, improve medication adherence and improve the quality of life for our patients. We will continue to grow together and really serve our communities to the best of our ability now that we're working side by side.

Jenner: It's very exciting to be in one of the first Village Medical at Walgreens practices in Arizona, and I think it's going to be a really great thing for our community. Working with the physicians and getting our patients on manageable drug regimens that enable them to take the right medications on time and be completely adherent, is going to be extremely beneficial. My personal interactions with Dr. Berkowitz and the entire Village Medical staff have been wonderful. I'm just really happy to be part of it.