

"MORTAR & PENCIL" CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY WISCONSIN SCHOOL OF PHARMACY STUDENT WRITING CLUB:

# Business Member Spotlight: altScripts Specialty Pharmacy

by Vincent Rotunno, 2022 PharmD/MBA Candidate, Patrick Begley, 2022 PharmD Candidate, Kevin Banse, 2022 PharmD Candidate

altScripts Specialty Pharmacy is an independent specialty pharmacy in West Milwaukee, WI focused on improving clinical and economic outcomes for patients suffering from complex disease states. Utilizing a team-based model, altScripts facilitates the safe handling of highly expensive pharmaceuticals and coordinates their delivery to patients. The pharmacy has many unique roles for pharmacy technicians and pharmacists to focus in concentrated areas of expertise such as prior authorization support staff, a financial assistance team, a logistics team, and clinic-

based pharmacist programs. altScripts is one of the first independent specialty pharmacies in the state of Wisconsin to be accredited by the Utilization Review Accreditation Commission (URAC). In obtaining this achievement, altScripts underwent rigorous examinations designed to evaluate their systems and processes, signifying altScripts commitment to quality patient care. altScripts specialties include dermatology, gastroenterology, oncology, rheumatology, hepatitis, multiple sclerosis, and HIV. They also offer acute and chronic disease state management services, insurance coverage and coordination of

benefits, financial assistance, and free, discreet medication delivery to patients.

## Day to Day Practice

Each day, pharmacists are responsible for verifying and preparing orders for a mid-morning transfer to the shipping department for delivery. From there, pharmacists divide up the required chart reviews and the prior authorization team tackles insurance challenges. The work environment is centered on clear and concise communication. Pharmacists and technicians all have the ability to verbally communicate any necessary requirements to the appropriate party when handling medication therapy management or coordination; however, documentation in specific areas of the operations and clinical platforms are what allows for efficient transition of care between pharmacy personnel. In this unique practice model, it is uncommon for patients to stop by the pharmacy on their way home from work to receive an in-person consultation. Instead, pharmacists schedule telephone calls with patients in advance, allowing them to complete a thorough analysis of a patient's chart, interpret pertinent labs, and review a patient's past therapy goals before the scheduled appointment. Telepharmacy comes with an additional benefit for altScripts pharmacists as it permits patients to interact with their pharmacist from the comfort of their own home. altScripts director Dr. Angelo Jones believes this practice allows his pharmacists to enter each appointment with a genuine sense of accessibility, offering patients the time they need to establish trusting relationships.

## Raising the Bar

Dr. Angelo Jones, PharmD, BCPS, has been the Director of Pharmacy at altScripts Specialty Pharmacy since their opening in 2015. Previously, Dr. Jones worked as an

Below: Caleb Rosenbalm, PharmD



inpatient clinical pharmacist and later as an ambulatory care clinical pharmacist in the Advocate Aurora Health system. He has been an active Pharmacy Society of Wisconsin (PSW) member since beginning his pharmacy education in 2008 and has served as an Education Committee Member for the Greater Milwaukee College of Clinical Pharmacy (GMCCP) since 2015.

Dr. Jones encourages genuine investment in the profession of pharmacy. Where one might learn the skills needed to understand complex disease states inside and out through their professional education, Dr. Jones finds intangible value in social skills. Evidenced by altScripts' extensive professional network, Dr. Jones believes that the relationships of his staff and local practitioners should not be limited to just work-relationships. He also believes that building personal relationships is a cornerstone for transparency between providers and improving patient care.

## Bumps in the Road

Dr. Jones was introduced to opportunities in specialty pharmacy by networking with various individuals at different pharmacy conferences and events. Relationships were formed that would later steer him towards the opportunity with altScripts Specialty Pharmacy. With any new business, there are always obstacles in the beginning stages of development. When asked about the challenges altScripts has faced over the years, Dr. Jones reflected on the difficulty in navigating the landscape of insurance reimbursements and the model of pharmacy practice developed at altScripts. Due to the complexity of both a patient's therapy plan and their insurance coverage, a dedicated role, the prior-authorization specialist, serves as a solution to resolving insurance complications without infringing on patient-care. Another obvious, yet sometimes forgotten, challenge facing specialty pharmacies is the handling of high risk, highly expensive medications. This requires strong attention to detail, as any potential overstock or misplaced medication could result in an extreme financial loss for the company. The handling of these medications has become a primary focal point for both staff



Above: Paul Rosman, PharmD

pharmacists and the delivery team, who rely heavily on industry standards and in-house protocols for storing, organizing, and distributing these delicate products.

## Moving Forward

Dr. Jones says the altScripts team is always thinking about what lies ahead, but their primary focus now is to continue providing quality services to their patients while building invaluable relationships with providers and members of the community. Paul Rosman, PharmD, has been with altScripts for just over 2 years and appreciates the impact he gets to make on the patients he works with. He especially values having the ability to spend extended periods of time working with patients to better understand how their disease state is affecting them and their specific needs for treatment. Dr. Rosman believes that serving as a specialty pharmacist gives him more freedom to use his degree to its fullest extent, while also being able to help patients achieve their treatment goals. In the unique setting of a specialty pharmacy, Dr. Rosman can continually follow the progress his patients make, while thinking about what changes may be advantageous to them. This differs from other traditional practice settings that may only allow for limited exposure to patients in a fast-paced

retail environment or where patients may be under care for a short amount of time.

Dr. Jones expressed how important it is for the altScripts team to take a step back and reflect on how much they have accomplished in such a short amount of time. These accomplishments have created a solid foundation for their team and building off of this is vital to their future success. Most notably, the major accomplishments of altScripts are the aforementioned URAC accreditation, along with the implementation of the CUW-altScripts PGY1 residency program. Dr. Jones and other personnel at altScripts are very optimistic regarding the outlook for their growth and the increased ability to make a positive impact on the lives of the patients they serve. Ultimately, the culture that has been created within their company has resulted in a successful team-based approach to patient care and confidence to tackle challenges going forward.

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