

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

Business Member Spotlight: Evergreen Pharmacy

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As a co-owner of an independent community specialty pharmacy, community leader, and role model, Andrew Hochradel, PharmD has practiced in independent community pharmacy since 2012. Originally from Toledo, Ohio, Dr. Hochradel discovered his passion for community pharmacy while on an Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experience (APPE) rotation at an independent community pharmacy in Augusta, Georgia, where he eventually practiced as a pharmacist for two years. After moving back to the Midwest, Hochradel harnessed his passion and made it into his own business. Evergreen Pharmacy has been serving patients in the metro Milwaukee area since 2014.

Day-to-Day Practice

Evergreen Pharmacy is an independent community specialty pharmacy located in West Allis, Wisconsin. Evergreen Pharmacy strives to increase provider and medication accessibility for patient populations in the behavioral health and rheumatology communities. The pharmacy works to establish strong pharmacy-provider relationships through collaborative practice agreements and to deliver excellent patient care.

While his day-to-day role changes based on the needs of the practice, Hochradel focuses his work on leading the team. Hochradel says, "We have really great team members and I am thankful to be surrounded by smart and caring individuals." In total, the team at Evergreen Pharmacy is comprised of five pharmacists and nine pharmacy technicians. The pharmacy operates in a professional closed-door setting with all medication dispensing done via delivery to patient homes. Patients only come in to the pharmacy by appointment for their injections or for

new onboarding with their medication synchronization (MedSync) program.

Patients who choose to fill their whole profile of medications with Evergreen Pharmacy have the option to synchronize their prescriptions using the MedSync program. By doing this, the patient will receive all of their medication refills on the same day each month. This creates convenience for the patient, as it decreases the number of trips to the pharmacy, and their medications are delivered right to their door.

Clinical pharmacists at Evergreen Pharmacy see patients at behavioral health and rheumatology clinics. The pharmacists at telepsychiatry clinics hold independent injection appointments for their patients. These appointments serve to increase patient access to long-acting injectable medications for patients who have issues with adherence or compliance. Pharmacists are also assessing patient medication regimens for efficacy and safety, performing comprehensive medication reviews, and working collaboratively with clinic providers.

Evergreen Pharmacy has developed strong partnerships with allied health professionals. Its focus is on collaborating with specialty providers, such as rheumatologists, dermatologists, gastroenterologists, and psychiatrists. In doing so, they are always finding new ways to collaborate, including embracing digital and telehealth platforms. Evergreen Pharmacy has greatly improved communication with one of their longstanding rheumatology office partners by integrating their digital platform, thereby allowing expanded access to information and improved communication and patient care.

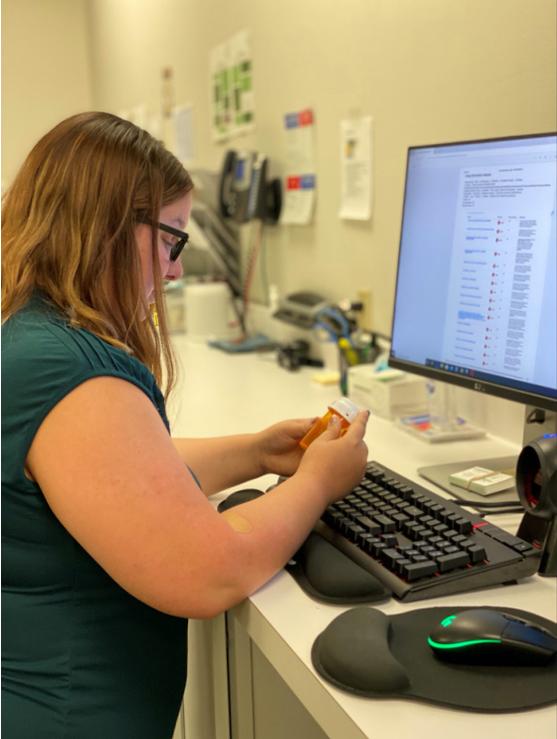
As president and cofounder, Hochradel fosters a work environment that encourages teamwork and community involvement. In addition to being medication experts, Evergreen Pharmacy also gives back to its

community through the pharmacy's Green Team. The Green Team is responsible for engaging all Evergreen staff members in community service events. Every year, Evergreen Pharmacy has a team that participates in a walk and provides monetary donations for the Arthritis Foundation. In the past, Evergreen has collected winter clothing items, toys, and other items that are then donated to adult and youth shelters in the Milwaukee area. The team also volunteered their time preparing meals with a local organization and at soup kitchens.

Raising the Bar

The mission at Evergreen Pharmacy is to improve the lives of patients by continuously redefining conventional practices. When asked what makes Evergreen Pharmacy unique, Hochradel states, "We really stay focused on what we do. We are very good with rheumatology, and we are very good with behavioral health, as well as some other disease states. By staying focused and specializing, we can set ourselves apart from other pharmacies, which are typically generalists." All Evergreen pharmacists receive special





training to administer non-vaccine injections.

Evergreen Pharmacy also sets itself apart by hosting a PGY1 community residency program. Their program is unique from others as it is heavily influenced by the resident's interests and passions. Hochradel explains that he uses the residency program as a catalyst for pilot-based programs by giving the resident autonomy. He sees the resident's project as a source of new ventures and he does his best to marry the needs of the pharmacy and its patients with the desires of his residents. By allowing residents to take charge and follow their passions, Hochradel has seen more success come from the program throughout the four years it has been in place.

One success story is Evergreen's 2019-2020 PGY1 resident, Taylor Page, PharmD. Dr. Page worked to expand the collaborative relationship with a partner rheumatology office, and she created a new and ongoing pharmacist role on the clinic team. Evergreen is currently in the process of further expanding Page's position to provide enhanced patient care services similar to those performed at their behavioral health clinics.

Bumps in the Road

Evergreen Pharmacy is not immune to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and has had to adapt its practice to overcome those challenges. With the help of modern technology, a majority of the staff has the ability to work remotely. The Evergreen team has continued to serve their patients

throughout the pandemic, keeping their focus on patient and employee safety. Now, more than ever, the pharmacy team is there to support their patients. They are educating employees and patients about COVID-19 symptoms and serving as a resource for patients with questions regarding the virus. The pharmacy has also implemented proactive measures to ensure patient safety, including strict handwashing policies, thorough daily cleaning and disinfecting in the pharmacy, continuing to make hand sanitizer available, strictly adhering to the state-wide mask mandate, and taking personal responsibility in minimizing the spread of coronavirus. While it has taken a few months to adjust, Hochradel states that his team has done a great job adapting to the sudden environment change.

Aside from COVID-19, one of the most notable challenges Evergreen Pharmacy has overcome is the implementation of a long-acting intramuscular (IM) medication injection service for their patients. Finding a documentation method for Evergreen's injection service that is compliant with regulations and also convenient for employees has been difficult. Evergreen needs to communicate to the provider exactly what happens during each appointment with a patient. Vital information that must be relayed to the physician includes medication name, dose, strength, administration site, lot number, and expiration date. Pharmacist interventions also need to be documented and relayed to the physician in a SOAP note format. Initially, Hochradel and his

team started with a paper process to capture the appropriate documentation. Learning through trial and error, they went through five different documentation processes until they finally found one that worked. The challenge now is making the process more efficient. Paperwork can pile up, take up a lot of space, and be difficult to rummage through when looking for answers. Because of this, the pharmacy is now looking to transition their documentation process to an electronic one.

Implementing practice advancement is difficult. Hochradel reflects on the early phases of Evergreen's injection service and shares that his biggest fear was ensuring his employees did not feel left behind. With every change that is made, staff need to be informed and retrained on the new process. Hochradel says, "We didn't want to miss a small step that could cause an issue, and we didn't want to leave any staff members behind." While there can be uncertainty and fear during the implementation process, it was important for Hochradel and his team at Evergreen to stay focused on their driving force: serving gaps in their community. Evergreen Pharmacy has always made it a priority to set themselves apart from other pharmacies—they want to be niche-focused and specialized. That is why in 2016, when pharmacists were able to administer IM injections with an order in Wisconsin, Hochradel saw this as an opportunity to specialize in this area. Hochradel knew his team could accomplish this goal successfully and quickly. Four years later, Evergreen Pharmacy now has a successful injection

clinic that serves patients throughout the state, seeing anywhere from three to 10 patients in a given day.

Moving Forward

Driven by its mission to improve the lives of its patients by continuously redefining conventional practices, Evergreen Pharmacy is continually looking for new ways to serve patients. One way they plan to do this is through the expansion of their MedSync program. This is done by enrolling current patients who receive injections at the pharmacy, and through partnerships with pharmacy schools in the area. By using these partnerships, Evergreen receives help in working up patients and performing medication reconciliations. After this is completed, staff can then coordinate for oral medications to be delivered to patients at the time of their injection appointment or to their home.

Aside from improving things within his own business, Hochradel aspires to expand opportunities for patients in his community and other professionals in the pharmacy community. He encourages other pharmacists and pharmacies

to not only be involved in pharmacy organizations, but to join other allied health professional organizations. For example, Evergreen Pharmacy has strong interests in rheumatology. In an effort to become more involved in rheumatology practices, Evergreen Pharmacy team members attend the Wisconsin Rheumatology Association Annual Meeting. At this event, Evergreen Pharmacy team members partake in education programs to expand their knowledge about rheumatology, to ultimately improve the care they provide for their patients. To his colleagues looking to implement something new in their practice, Hochradel recommends building a resident program and hosting APPE students.

For those aspiring to obtain a career in pharmacy, Hochradel encourages trying as many different practice sites as possible. He advises, "In pharmacy there are many different opportunities to practice in many different settings. With so many routes you can choose, be sure to explore your options, keep an open mind, and above all, make sure you enjoy it!"

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