

ROSALIND FRANKLIN UNIVERSITY OF MEDICINE AND SCIENCE SCHOOL OF PHARMACY STUDENT WRITING CLUB:

Business Member Spotlight: Chet Johnson Drug

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As the only full-service pharmacy in a 15-mile radius, “We are pretty busy all day long,” said Matthew Johnson, RPh, the owner of Chet Johnson Drug (CJD). Johnson’s grandfather first opened the store in Amery, Wisconsin in 1932, and it was passed down to Johnson’s father and uncle before Johnson began to carry on the family legacy. The pharmacy is staffed by Johnson and two other full-time pharmacists and four technicians. His sister, Sarah Flanum, is the general manager, who supervises about 25 additional employees. On a typical day, CJD is busy filling prescriptions all day long. As Johnson explains, “We have got a very strong and robust synchronization program with about 1600 patients.” The pharmacy operates at two locations: the main store in downtown Amery and another in partnership with the local medical center. At the downtown store, besides being a full line pharmacy, they also sell food, household goods, toys, and gifts, all while providing the community with a year-around ice cream and coffee shop. Being the sole provider of pharmacy services in the Amery community, CJD is often collaborating with physicians and other healthcare providers nearby to create the best experience for patients. Because the

Amery community is rural, CJD is one of the only places nearby for the residents to find prescription counseling; prescription pick-up and delivery; an array of over-the-counter medications; and more. This makes the work CJD does each day a vital part of the city of Amery.

Stepping It UP

Chet Johnson Drug stores are always striving to be the best they can be. Johnson stated, “In a world where everything is electronic and technology is ever changing, we have to adapt to the times ... we have, in the recent years, already remodeled twice.” Johnson acts for the betterment of his community, is willing to make changes when it benefits his patients. The independent pharmacy tries to be a one-stop place for all patients and goes even the extra mile. Johnson explained, “If the patients need their medication, even in the late hours of the night, then I will deliver.”

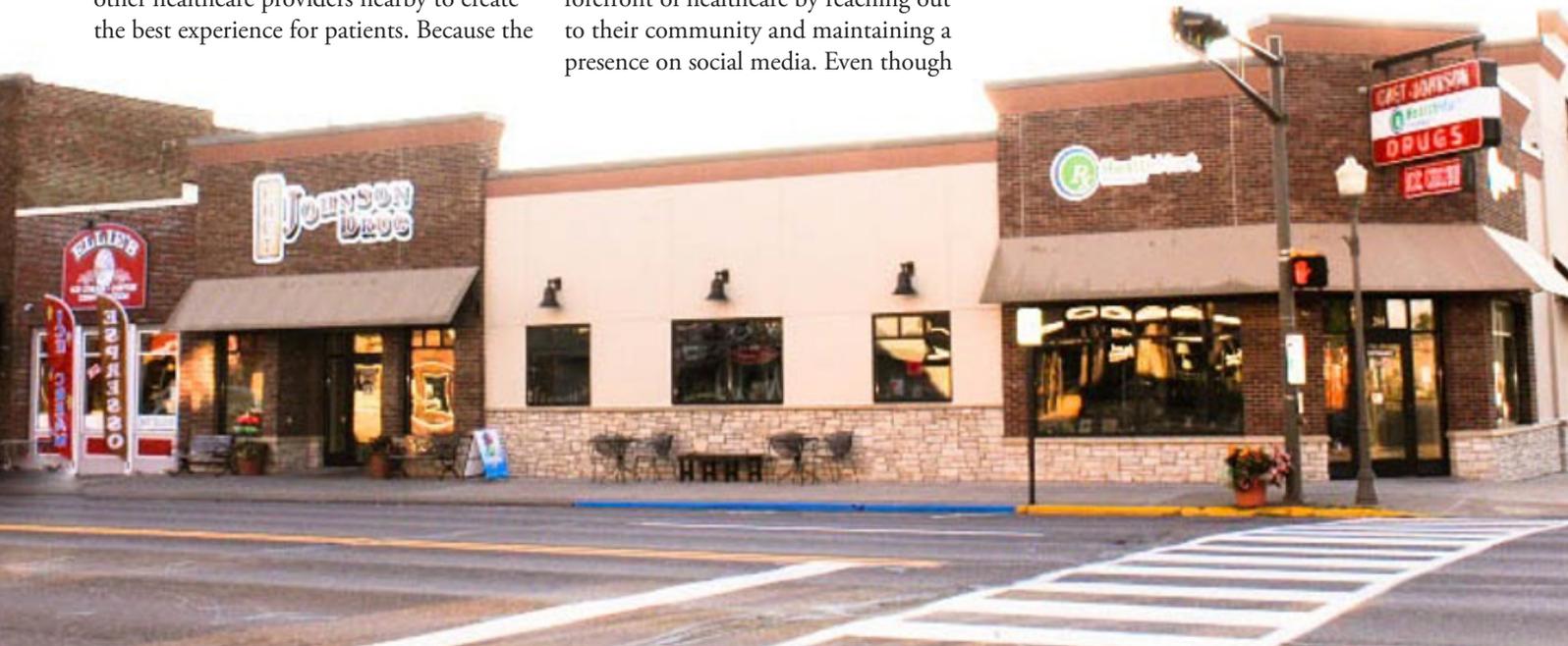
Chet Johnson Drug always tries to raise the bar in healthcare. One of the unique services that this independent pharmacy offers is custom-fit shoes for extra protection for the diabetic patient population, many of whom have decreased feeling in their feet.

No matter what, they remain at the forefront of healthcare by reaching out to their community and maintaining a presence on social media. Even though

resources can be limited, especially under the circumstances of COVID-19, CJD wants to set an example as a top-notch pharmacy, not only for their city but for the rest of the country.

COVID-19 Complications

As the pandemic began, “it was hard, things were changing by the minute, and the uncertainty of how we were going to take care of patients, ourselves, and the drug supply went on for quite a while,” Johnson stated. While things have calmed down as of this writing, and the residents of Amery have adjusted to this new normal, it is still a challenge for CJD to stay on top of things while following Wisconsin’s latest protocols. When asked about how his community is adjusting, Johnson said, “Most of our patients and customers do a really good job with wearing a mask and physical distancing.” As one of the few businesses in the city that remained open during Wisconsin’s stay-at-home order, CJD worked tirelessly to provide the same care their patients were used to in a safe and ethical manner. Surprisingly, pharmacy benefits manager (PBM) issues were not halted by the pandemic for CJD. According to Johnson, “between egregious PBM behaviors and forced audits based on

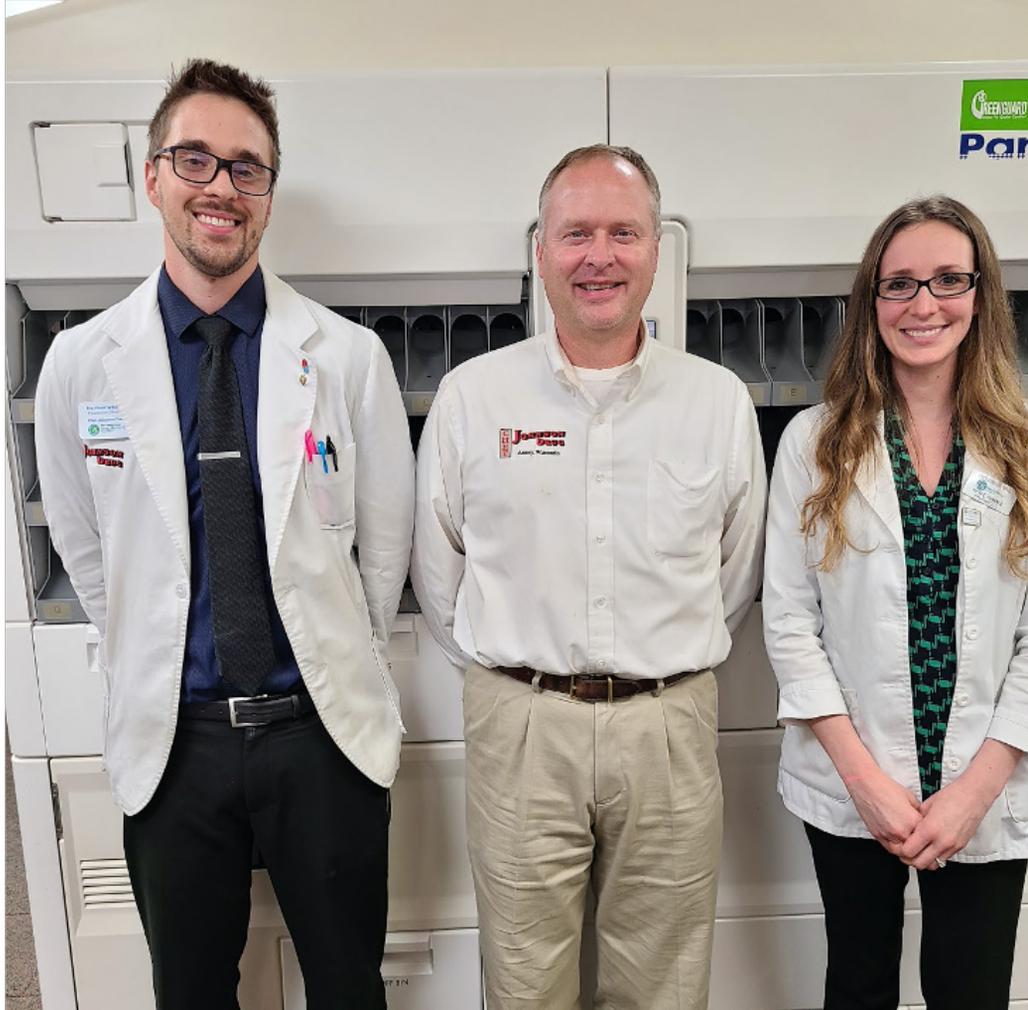


small clerical errors, we have been through a lot these past few months.” As they have gotten a better grasp on the pandemic, CJD has been able to devote more time to combating these PBM challenges, while still providing the Amery community with a thorough pharmacy experience. Johnson is a member of a pharmacy owners group, with owners from across the country. This board of directors meets quarterly for two days to discuss the individual business operations of each pharmacy, and to help each other with challenges. Johnson described it as “an invaluable time to get the knowledge and insight from other owners from different regions of the country and try to give and get advice on a wide array of issues.”

Additional Challenges

At a time when COVID-19 still circulates, other challenges tend to get deprioritized. Johnson stated, “One of our top priorities now is to keep everyone healthy and safe in this pandemic. As for one challenge that remains true in the world of pharmacy, is for us to get the provider status.” Pharmacies today are finding it difficult to receive adequate reimbursement for the services that pharmacists are able to provide. At CJD, pharmacists provide medication synchronization, point of care testing, blood pressure screening, and genetic testing, among other services; in rural Wisconsin, these services prove to be vital, as other accessibility to health screenings can be limited, including in the city of Amery.

One approach to advocating for provider status is coming from pharmacy colleges. Colleges of pharmacy are adjusting their curricula to provide their students with more clinical knowledge. As a result, there has been a surge in residency opportunities available to recent graduates, compared to years past. Pharmacists are now expanding their role with medication therapy management and becoming more integral team members in healthcare. Johnson wants pharmacists to remain clinically driven and hopes in the near future that pharmacists get provider status.



Above: Chet Johnson Drug Pharmacists, Matthew Wlodyga (left), Matthew Johnson (center), and Nicole Sheldon (right).
Bottom Left: Outside Chet Jonson Drug in Amery, WI.

Looking Ahead

With the potential for new pandemic protocols looming ahead, CJD remains optimistic and continues to work toward growth for both their business and their community. Johnson explained, “We are heavily involved in the Community Pharmacy Enhanced Services Network (CPESN) initiative, where we are hoping for opportunities to learn more and help patients in disease state management, as well as finding ways to profit from our services while still prioritizing the well-being of the patient.” In addition to CPESN, the pharmacy promotes influenza vaccines and other vaccines to every patient they encounter, and provides health insurance counseling when the time comes for Medicare open enrollment each year. Looking ahead in the world of pharmacy, Johnson shared his recommendations for future pharmacists: “Always take the initiative to learn, get as much experience as you can, [and] be the role model in your pharmacy when providing care to patients.” Working in and being around the pharmacy his entire life, Johnson knows the

profession well. As a business owner and a pharmacist himself, Johnson’s goal for his own pharmacy is for “Chet Johnson Drug to work to be ahead of the game, providing top-notch service to our community for years to come.”

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