

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

Business Member Spotlight: Trig's Pharmacy

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Trig's Pharmacy is a small chain of independent pharmacies located in northern Wisconsin. Trig's started as a small store in Land O'Lakes, Wis. in 1971 and currently has five retail locations and four independent pharmacies located in Tomahawk, Rhinelander, Minocqua, and Eagle River. All of Trig's Pharmacies are conveniently attached to a grocery store to provide easy access for patients.

Day to Day Practice

A day at Trig's Pharmacy can be anything but routine. Like many community pharmacies, however, the mornings start off with receiving prescriptions from providers and filling them for the patients. Trig's takes great pride in putting the patient first and of keeping the patient-pharmacy relationship strong. While the morning work might be typical, the rest of each day's agenda makes Trig's stand out. With four locations in northern Wisconsin cities, the staff pharmacists have become closely

connected to their communities. Each retail location has one or two pharmacists and several technicians. This smaller staffing and small-town setting allow pharmacy staff to build close bonds with their patients. Pharmacists at Trig's Pharmacy can perform more advanced pharmaceutical care tasks, such as medication therapy management and comprehensive medication reviews.

Immunizations are another area where Trig's Pharmacy shines. Trig's pharmacists not only provide vaccinations at the pharmacy but also travel to various assisted

Below: Trig's Pharmacy Staff in Rhinelander, WI.





living facilities to help immunize patients who are not capable of getting to the pharmacy. The COVID-19 pandemic provided another opportunity for Trig's Pharmacies to serve their patients. Located in a mostly rural part of the state, Trig's staff knew that starting the vaccination effort early and quickly was best, to help ensure that COVID-19 did not continue to impact their communities at the rate it had been. Once the COVID-19 vaccines were developed and approved, Trig's worked to ensure that patients who wanted or needed the vaccine could get it, and those who wanted information on COVID or the vaccine could obtain well-sourced information. The staff pharmacists were able to provide insight into the changing situation to the best of their knowledge, and they initiated many clinics to immunize their communities quickly to help minimize the outbreak in their area. Trig's partnered with large dairy farms and the local Hispanic communities, which make up a large part of the population in northern Wisconsin, to bring COVID immunization clinics to them.

Outside of individual pharmacies, Trig's Pharmacy is also active in the Pharmacy Society of Wisconsin (PSW). All their pharmacies are certified by the Wisconsin Pharmacy Quality Collaborative (WPQC), ensuring that their pharmacies provide the best possible patient care.

Bumps in the Road

For every organization, there are bumps in the road. Trig's Pharmacy is no exception. With the current shortage of pharmacy technicians, they are looking at initiatives to encourage more technicians to apply. They are also looking to develop technician's skills to help provide them with more opportunities within the pharmacy. Another challenge is the reluctance of many pharmacists to move to and work in rural areas. Trig's prides itself on the fact that its

patients know their pharmacists and vice versa; this helps pharmacists feel connected to the people they treat.

Raising the Bar

There are many elements of Trig's Pharmacy that make it stand out. A major one is the flexibility that it offers pharmacists. Staff members at Trig's work on various projects to help make their pharmacies even better. These projects can be either specific to one pharmacy or company wide. Josie Brilowski, PharmD, MBA, the director of pharmacy for Trig's Pharmacy, says that one of her projects was to expand the bubble-packing service to individual patients in the community as well as in long-term care facilities. Many current patients are given medications through MedBox, but Trig's is pushing to switch patients to bubble packing to help reduce risks and cost. Many pharmacists and pharmacy managers are given wide latitude to implement their ideas for improvements. This gives them a sense of ownership and pride in their pharmacy. Doing this allows the pharmacist to enact their ideas for improved healthcare or medication adherence incentives faster and more efficiently.

As a retail pharmacy, there is no special training or requirements needed to work at Trig's; however, they do provide their own training for their staff to provide the best patient care. They are currently looking at immunization training for their technicians and a better program to help technicians progress to certification. Trig's Pharmacy is putting forth effort and resources to ensure that its technicians can work to their full potential. The development of their technicians' skills will make them more valuable to the company and industry.

The success of Trig's Pharmacy is in part due to the great work of its staff members. Pharmacists are continuously ranked in the top five of the most accessible healthcare

providers according to [Gallup News](#). In small, rural communities in northern Wisconsin, access to healthcare is limited. This means that the pharmacist is often the healthcare provider people interact with most. Trig's pharmacists know their communities well. They also build strong relationships with the few providers in the area.

Moving Forward

Trig's Pharmacy will continue to expand to help its communities. Trig's patients often live many miles from a healthcare provider. Trig's has realized this need and has built a niche in helping patients in this area.

You can learn more at the Trig's Pharmacy [website](#), or on [Instagram](#).

For pharmacists who are interested in working in rural areas, Trig's director of pharmacy Josie Brilowski suggests reaching out to pharmacies in the area, such as Trig's, and starting to make connections. The areas are small and close-knit communities where a positive attitude and business professionalism are valued. Trig's looks at its pharmacies as more than just a location for people to refill their medication. Instead, Trig's pharmacies are where patients can come and be treated like family. Trig's offers both IPPE rotations, to help pharmacy students see the differences in treating patients in a rural setting, and APPE rotations, where the students will provide more hands-on care and help with immunization clinics.

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Disclosure: The author(s) declare no real or potential conflicts or financial interest in any product or service mentioned in the manuscript, including grants, equipment, medications, employment, gifts, and honoraria.