

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

Business Member Spotlight: Rhineland Hometown Pharmacy

by Harley Anderson, 2025 PharmD Candidate



David Schiek comes from a long line of medical professionals serving the Rhineland, Wisconsin community. After attending pharmacy school at Ferris State University in Big Rapids, Michigan, Schiek returned to his hometown of Rhineland in 1996 to serve as a pharmacist at Stoxen Pharmacy. He practiced for nearly 25 years in various independent and chain pharmacies before purchasing and merging two local independent pharmacies, including Stoxen Pharmacy, into what we now know as Rhineland Hometown Pharmacy in 2018.

Day to Day Practice

Rhineland Hometown Pharmacy is an independent pharmacy nestled right in downtown Rhineland. In addition to their wide variety of pharmacy and patient care services, they have a stylish front end that sells home décor and specialty gifts. Their array of unique services includes comprehensive medication reviews (CMR), blood pressure monitoring, and durable medical equipment rentals. Some patients even stop in one or more times a week for Schiek to check their blood pressure and send it to their primary care provider's office. He describes the working environment at Rhineland Hometown Pharmacy as "fast and furious." With only one pharmacist on staff day-to-day and an average daily script volume of over 200, things can get hectic quickly. With patients needing consultations, receiving vaccines, and asking questions, Schiek has become a master of multitasking and prioritizing.

Schiek has extensive connections to the Rhineland community. His father, grandfather, and great-grandfather were all surgeons in the Rhineland area. With a population of around 8,000, Rhineland is a close-knit community where everyone

knows and supports one another. "I was born and raised here ... I'm a fourth-generation healthcare provider in the area... so [my ties to the community] do run deep," Schiek says. Word of mouth within the town has played a significant role in growing Rhineland Hometown Pharmacy's patient base. Schiek's connections to the Rhineland healthcare world have led physicians and nurses to recommend his pharmacy to their patients.

Schiek believes that advocating for the advancement of pharmacy practice is of great importance. He has taken on a leadership role on the PSW Board of Directors as the Region C Director. They recently had their first meeting of the year, where directors spent time getting to know one another and setting priorities for the year ahead. He's excited for what's to come, saying, "We'll go over topics that we feel are of interest and then see how we want to present them to the PSW group as a whole ... We'll also discuss certain legislation that is coming about that we want to take a stance on." He's looking forward to being a part of the advocacy that PSW has been so successful with.

Raising the Bar

Schiek prides himself on the advanced practice model of his pharmacy. In 2021, he partnered with PSW and the Wisconsin Pharmacy Quality Collaborative (WPQC) program to assess the impact of providing CMR services to patients. For 6 months, he met with 16 patients bimonthly to look for issues with their medication management and find solutions for them. A specific issue that Schiek wanted to address was patients not filling their medications on time. "I wanted to find out why; if it was economic, if it was a delivery issue, if it was [being] forgetful, whatever their reasons were," Schiek said. After meeting with the patient, they would work together to set goals

and follow up on those goals at their next appointment. In terms of impact, Schiek says, "Those patients did better [with] knowing why it's important to take their medications." For this project, Schiek was honored with the WPQC Innovation award from PSW in 2022.

Schiek believes that the kind demeanor and positive attitude displayed by his staff has been a big part of making his practice successful. He says, "I put a lot of strain and stress on myself, but I have a really excellent staff, and they are probably the biggest reason for any success I've had. ... That's what I've found most valuable here." Lorana Klunder, a patient of Rhineland Hometown Pharmacy, feels that "personal touch" is an essential part of pharmacy that is being lost in our world. She raves about the care that Schiek and his team provide to patients, saying, "Dave and his staff are very knowledgeable and helpful with any problems that I have. I would not go anywhere else. I love my pharmacy!" With the motto, "Our family caring for your family," it's clear that Rhineland Hometown Pharmacy cares a great deal about building a personal connection with the patients they serve. Carol Shattuck, a Rhineland Hometown Pharmacy technician, knows that patients are the top priority in their pharmacy. Shattuck says, "Our patients come first! We strive to do the best for our patients by listening to their needs and concerns. Then we exceed their expectations!"

Bumps in the Road

Insurance companies have been a thorn in the side of small independent pharmacies. Pharmacy benefit managers (PBM) have made it nearly impossible for these pharmacies to be successful. "Right now, [direct and indirect remuneration] fees are growing year after year. We have to come up with other revenue sources to

offset that,” Schiek says. He’s hopeful that the passing of provider status would offer a solution in terms of billing and revenue, but they will still be searching for solutions until that day comes. When the insurance companies incentivize patients to use their specific contracted pharmacies, independent pharmacies end up taking a big hit, unable to compete with the pharmacy chains that operate under corporate structures. “[Insurance companies] not giving the patient options has been a big blow to us,” says Schiek. We have these services and we’re trying to get the patients healthy, and they’re taking our patients away from us ... I don’t think not having an option serves healthcare well.”

Another issue that Schiek has been dealing with is inadequate patient reception of the services that he implements. It’s difficult for him to help patients understand his services and why they’re important with the limited time that both he and his patients have. Schiek always tries to consider his patient population when predicting whether or not a new patient care service will be successful or a waste of time. In terms of implementing CMRs with patients, Schiek says, “It’s new to them. They’re used to talking more with their doctors or prescribers about it than with their pharmacist ... To actually sit down and dig into some of those problems...and try to

make them rethink their health has been difficult.”

Moving Forward

Schiek has high hopes for new programs and services that he would like to offer his patients. Specifically, he would like to implement more proactive and preventative healthcare initiatives. One service that Schiek is particularly interested in is Cognivue™ cognitive screening. This screening system would allow patients to get a baseline cognitive reading that they can then compare to future readings in order to detect early signs of cognitive decline such as Alzheimer’s or dementia. “I think that’s going to be important for people to get a baseline and then do it once a year to see where they’re at. When we find that they’re slipping or something’s going wrong, we can either treat it over the counter with vitamins and supplements or communicate with the provider to get a prescription,” Schiek says. As a believer in disease prevention rather than treatment, he wants to be able to help patients before they show signs of being sick, no matter the disease state they are dealing with. He says, “We don’t want them getting sick and then coming to us. I’d rather have them come to us first...As weird as it sounds, I want to try to get them off of their medications.”

Schiek is optimistic about the passing of pharmacist provider status in Wisconsin and is excited about what it would mean for his business. Schiek feels that the pushback he’s seeing regarding this major change is the fear of pharmacists “stepping on toes” of physicians. He says, “I think the biggest barrier is that prescribers and other healthcare professionals are feeling like we’re trying to take over their domain.” He believes that it’s important for pharmacists to show the high value that they can add to the provider team. One way to do this is by first working together with physicians and getting them into pharmacies. “Once they’re associated with us, then I can do some of their health services without having to worry about having provider status first,” Schiek says. He feels that this would be a good way to ease everyone into the change and show prescribers how pharmacist provider status can be beneficial.

Schiek offers advice for aspiring pharmacists and those looking to implement practice advancement initiatives at their

sites. The best and easiest thing to do is to ask questions. Utilize the knowledge of mentors, other pharmacies, or PSW to learn about different ways to expand patient care services. “Sometimes when I’m transferring a prescription from pharmacy to pharmacy, I’ll ask the pharmacist some questions about [their practice]. I want to see what’s working for them,” Schiek says. Even if you aren’t practicing in an independent pharmacy setting, Schiek still recommends reaching out to leadership teams if you have a new patient care idea. “Find out what you like to do. Don’t get complacent with counting and counseling. If you have an interest in something ... ask if you can try it out. Initiate things on your own As long as you’re knowledgeable about what you want to do and how you’re going to do it, I don’t see any reason why people shouldn’t let you try.”

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Below: Rhinelander Hometown Pharmacy staff.

