



Remarkable **stories** the **chains** *can't* tell

Not long ago CVS said it was going to offer delivery services. Its Monday-Thursday delivery service takes 1-2 days, and 2-3 days the rest of the week. All that for only \$4.99. Hey, isn't that awesome? The media swooned, as if this had never been done before.

Of course, when the media asked NCPA for comment, we kind of shrugged. "What's all the fuss about? Independents have been doing same-day delivery for years." In other words, been there, done that. No big deal.

The numbers don't lie. According to the *NCPA Digest* sponsored by Cardinal Health, about 70 percent of all community pharmacies provide same-day delivery service, sometimes making multiple delivery runs each day. Many independent pharmacies don't charge the consumer anything for their prescription delivery service. As in free. Hey, *there's a concept*.

You don't brag about things like that because, well, for you it's just the right thing to do. I mean, why are the chains just getting around to this? Still, we asked you to send your stories so we could give you a bit of credit. You work tirelessly without much hoopla, despite low reimbursement and PBMs' shenanigans. But your patients appreciate it, otherwise you wouldn't be consistently ranked near the top as one of the most trusted professions in the country. You deserve to take a bow. These are your tales – the pharmacy success stories that chains can't tell.





Let's be clear here. Every delivery I make is a remarkable interaction with the patient. Nothing can replace the exchange of kindness, compassion, and knowledge that human beings can deliver. As far as I know, FedEx, UPS, and the U.S. Postal Service do not take the time to tend to the needs and answer the questions patients may have. I will never forget the time I delivered to one of my patients, and she informed me that she had received a call from a company offering her a free blood glucose meter. She had received the meter in the mail, and she asked me if I knew how it worked. "Didn't they show you or explain how it worked?" I asked. "No," she replied. I explained to her that we had meters at our store that we could provide to her. She told me that they said they would just bill Medicare and she would not need to worry about it. She showed me that the telemarketing company had charged Medicare \$640 for a glucose meter that we sell for \$20. This has always stuck with me how people are taken advantage of by those not interested in the needs of the consumer – our patients.

A patient who is "always home" did not answer the door, so our driver entered and found the patient unresponsive, called 911, and probably saved the patient's life just by stopping by that day.

A customer had fallen. The driver assisted him and stayed with him until his family and medical care personnel arrived.

We noticed that one of our patients was losing weight due to his inability to afford groceries. Soon after that he "won" a drawing at our pharmacy for a grocery gift certificate.

Our driver found a patient on the floor and immediately notified emergency staff. The patient was transported by ambulance to the hospital.

Our driver noticed a patient acting strangely and called the pharmacy. We alerted the family and called EMS, and the patient received lifesaving treatment.

Our driver delivers to an elderly patient who complains of swollen legs, and the driver, noticing how serious the patient's condition was, called to inform the pharmacist. Our pharmacist called the patient's physician to alert him to the need for prompt intervention, and the patient received quick and timely medical help.

Our driver spent about 20 minutes in the home of a recently widowed patient consoling her.

Our driver made sure the patient was receiving his entire order. In that inspection, the driver said the patient had received vial closures that were not easy to open. The driver was able to make the vials easy to open and therefore accessible for the patient.

Our driver views himself as an ambassador for our pharmacy, and he is often listening and learning from patients. He offers additional services, such as bubble packing, when he determines there is a need. He has done that many times.

We have an elderly patient living in a rural area who needs help with his medications at home. He has a caregiver who comes over and sorts his drugs into a container for the week with each day's drugs in one slot. The patient had mixed them up after dropping them and didn't know what to take. A pharmacist went to the patient's house and sorted through the medications, putting them back in their appropriate position for the patient to take his medications for the week. Sometimes we help transport patients to town to go to city hall, or to shop, eat, or pick up their drugs at the pharmacy. We will give them a ride home for free.



We found that a patient had fallen, so we called the family and stayed with him until somebody came to assist him.

Our technician had just arrived at the home of a patient who had just fallen. The technician assisted the patient and called 911 for extra help.

I delivered during a snowstorm and also brought back the patient's trash and recycling containers from the end of the driveway. The patient asked if I could stay for dinner.

It is not uncommon for our delivery drivers to help patients with the occasional simple task, such as changing a light bulb, moving a piece of furniture, or taking something to the mailbox. Our patients form relationships with our drivers and look forward to seeing them. Sometimes these are the only visitors they may have in a day.

I personally deliver to a patient who is homebound and requires us to come in to his house since he can't get to the door. The chain pharmacy in town is not willing to do that so he switched to us. He doesn't have anyone else who can help him, so we are happy to help him out. Most days we are the only people who see him and check on him.

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We made numerous attempts to deliver to a patient, with no success. We contacted the local police, who made a wellness visit and found the patient in failing health. She had lost her phone behind the refrigerator.

A patient with severe dementia came to the door unclothed. We called family members, who followed up with medical intervention.

We did a hospice delivery and noticed that the spouse seemed distraught over his wife's nearness to death. The driver sensed this and asked if he could pray with him. The man was very grateful and seemed somewhat relieved after they prayed together.

We just do some little things, like changing batteries in a TV remote control, or removing trash for our elderly patients.

Many of our deliveries are to the elderly or disabled. One blind customer profusely thanks us when we come with her delivery because we are the only contact she has with the rest of the world. She enjoys the company, even if for only a few minutes. We have had a few patients who needed a little extra non-pharmacy help. For example, one customer was very frustrated with her pacemaker machine. Our technician driver sat down with her and read through the instructions with her and got her all set up. Our customer was in tears because she was so grateful for the extra help.

Our driver was asked by elderly patient to take the trash out, which he gladly obliged.



We observed an elderly patient having some problems and slurred speech. We contacted the family, and the patient was admitted to the hospital for care. The family was extremely appreciative.

On occasion, a driver will go over and above, as when a patient who had impaired vision was fearful after a bad windstorm had pulled her storm door loose from her mobile home. Our driver, after work, went back to her trailer and repaired her storm door. We only found out the next day when the patient called the pharmacy to thank us for our driver's good deed.

My drivers walk dogs, helps with cleaning up, and sometimes go to the store for bread and milk if the patient is homebound. If the patient uses local free transit and is at doctor's office after the transit system has closed for the day, we sometimes deliver the patients home with their medications.

Our delivery drivers have helped patients open their medications, take out the garbage, and assist with any other needs. We care about our patients and try to know them above and beyond delivering their medications. The patients enjoy the interaction, as some of them are homebound and enjoy someone just coming in to say hello.

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The patient wasn't able to walk her dog, so our driver took the dog outside to play while the patient wrote her check.

We notice that patients form a connection with our employees. One of them made a point to call and tell our driver happy birthday without needing anything from us.

On one of our deliveries we noticed the person was not himself. We regularly called the patient, and when we did not get a response, we called the police for a wellness check. The patient ended up in a nursing facility and is doing well.

Our driver noticed that one of our patients was not doing well. He contacted the pharmacist, who intervened and contacted the patient's family member for follow-up.

Our driver was making a delivery to a longtime patient, a lady in her 80s. Our patient did not answer the door, and he knew that she was just newly discharged from the hospital and waiting for her medication. After no response, our driver called the pharmacy, we called her son, the son called 911, and the patient was readmitted to the hospital. It was an intervention that saved a life.

Most of the customers have pets and our driver brings the pets dog biscuits and trims the dogs' nails when needed. She often runs brief errands for a shut-in customer. She has taken customers to doctors' appointments and fed their pets while the customers were hospitalized. She has also found new homes for pets when the owner has passed away.

We delivered medication in a special compliance package and the patient was extremely happy with the service and packaging.

The patient was having difficulty getting up and around and was very thankful that we could deliver medications to her.

Our driver assisted a patient in double checking her prescriptions to make sure she had all of them.

We offer free delivery to residents and three nursing facilities in our community, as well as free delivery to three local towns all 10 miles away. We also change watch batteries for \$3.99, which includes the cost of the battery. We are also very involved in promoting the school and all of its activities. As the owner I am also currently president of the hospital board, president of golf board, member of a local bank board and chairman of the church committee. We get involved in the community!

I delivered some medication after hours to a patient whose wife was in the hospital and he told me he ran out of milk. I said I was going to the grocery store anyway and picked up the milk for him and delivered it.

We have many patients on adherence packaging. If a correction ever needs to be made between deliveries, the driver will retrieve the package to be adjusted by the pharmacy and returned to the home.

We frequently have pharmacists complete the deliveries and counsel the patient on inhaler techniques and drug interactions. We have become such good friends with many of our delivery patients that they have invited us to pizza parties at their home.

We have a patient who has multiple sclerosis, and when my driver arrived at his home, the patient had fallen out of bed and could not get up. My employee took the time to make sure he was okay and assist him back into his bed so he could receive medical attention.

Our delivery driver is also a medical assistant. She has been responsible for making sure patients get care in critical situations and has called a patient's doctor for the patient to get a response, or, if necessary, to go to the hospital.

The 2018 NCPA Annual Convention provides plenty the chains can't deliver

As an independent pharmacist, you go out of your way to provide exceptional service for your patients. Now it's our turn to deliver exceptional educational programming and relationship building to you. You can learn about additional opportunities to bring services to your patients or brush up on something you might already be offering at the 2018 NCPA Annual Convention in Boston, Oct. 6-9. Come prepared to learn, grow, and seize the moment. With more than 30 sessions designed to **speed your evolution as a trusted health care provider** and a successful entrepreneur, the NCPA Annual Convention is the cutting edge, the place to **connect with the innovators** in community pharmacy and to **discover ideas and solutions** you can take home and put to work in your own enterprise. Visit www.ncpanet.org/meetings/annual-convention.

We have one patient who is on bed rest right now. She appreciates us so much because we will deliver to her any day and do anything she needs to help out her and her husband with their three kids.

The patient was usually at home, but we could not get her to answer the door. We called 911. Turns out, the elderly patient had fallen and been on the floor all night.



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One of our patients needed a medication, but on the day that the patient had planned to come in to pick it up, the region experienced a full-blown winter blizzard and he was concerned about driving in bad weather. So the store manager hopped into a four-wheel drive and drove nearly 20 miles to deliver the critical medication.

With more than three decades in pharmacy, I am committed to helping clients obtain optimal health and well-being throughout every stage of life. I own three health care companies and recognize the complementary relationship between nutrition, fitness, medication, self-care, and optimal health. I draw from the expertise of my three health care companies, working hand-in-hand to provide comprehensive health care services for my clients.

We have a patient who is legally blind, so the delivery driver verified the medications with him (this driver is also an EMT and pharmacy technician in training). He also combined duplicates to prevent an overdose risk.

We've been invited in for pie, asked to change a lightbulb, and we are frequently one of very few interactions our home-bound patients get.

We often receive a new prescription for emergency medications at 4 p.m., and the prescription is delivered within two hours of receipt. Our patients think that is remarkable.

When our pharmacy is closed for business, some of my customers will call me at home. Either they have just been discharged from the hospital or have realized they have run out of an important medication. A gentleman called me early on a Sunday saying he had been out of his insulin for a couple of days and had forgotten to get it refilled. I was happy to do it, and he was very grateful to us taking care of him after hours.

Many years ago a couple who were regular customers at my pharmacy had been trying to have a child but to no avail, so we let them make deferred payments for fertility treatments. Years later, I met the father at a function. He grabbed my arm and took me to meet someone. It was a young teenage girl – his daughter. He reminded me of our willingness to work with him and told me that this was the result of our compassion – his beautiful, loving daughter.

To be an active member of the health care team, independent pharmacies are often called upon to do so much more than just dispense a prescription. Patients and providers alike know that we will go above and beyond to make sure exceptional service is the norm. Diabetes education, vaccination services, and hormone replacement therapy consultations are just a few of our enhanced services.

Quick thinking by one of our pharmacists literally saved a patient's life recently. A new patient came in with a prescription for a blood thinner. The patient was just discharged from the hospital with this prescription. Our pharmacist immediately noticed that the dosage of the prescription seemed high and asked the patient about his history and recent hospitalization. If our pharmacist had not taken the time to ask questions and care for this patient like he did, that patient very likely would not be alive today.