

# CASE STUDY

## ACCREDITATION PUTS THE SPOTLIGHT ON QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Improving Your Business Through Accreditation



**Jessica Strobl, PharmD**  
Vice President of  
Professional Services  
~ Lewis Drug

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### BUILT ON A MISSION OF ‘PATIENTS FIRST’

Founded in 1942, Lewis Drug has been a trusted, family-owned neighborhood pharmacy for over 80 years. Today, the company has 60 locations throughout South Dakota, Minnesota, and Iowa, offering traditional pharmacy services to the surrounding communities. Many of their stores also support assisted living facilities, nursing homes, and other long-term care providers.

With a mission of putting patients first, Lewis Drug has a corporate team of experienced pharmacists and pharmacy technicians who provide guidance and support to each store. “We aim to give our pharmacists-in-charge the autonomy to run their stores in a way that meets the needs of their communities,” says Vice President of Professional Services for Lewis Drug, Jessica Strobl, PharmD. “Our goal is to take some of the day-to-day details of operating a pharmacy off their plates so they can focus on their patients.” That includes everything from establishing companywide safety protocols to staying on top of Medicare best practices and benchmarking requirements.

Lewis Drug knew accreditation would deliver incredible value in terms of operational efficiency, improving patient outcomes, and employee satisfaction. The challenge, Strobl says, is that the corporate team is relatively small. “The thought of putting all the pieces together for accreditation and keeping up with annual updates, especially where Medicare billing is concerned, is a bit overwhelming on top of our day-to-day responsibilities.”

That’s why in 2018, they turned to The Compliance Team (TCT).

### LEWIS DRUG’S ACCREDITATION JOURNEY

Working with pharmacies and healthcare providers nationwide, The Compliance Team is known for its industry-leading accreditation model. As a first step, Lewis Drug worked toward earning TCT’s Community Pharmacy Accreditation program, which includes DMEPOS (Durable Medical Equipment, Prosthetics, Orthotics, and Supplies) Part B. As an approved program by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), DMEPOS Part B accreditation was particularly important to the pharmacy. “I’d say there might have been a time when we considered not offering Medicare B billing because of the complexity,” says Strobl. “It can be a lot of extra work for low reimbursement rates.” Yet, not providing that service simply didn’t fit in with their philosophy of putting patients first. Added to that, she continues, Medicare B audits are pretty standard and require a lot of documentation. “Before working with The Compliance Team and earning accreditation, we

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*“Not only has Accreditation resulted in better consistency across our 60 locations, but it has made us more self-aware of the things we needed to be accountable to.”*

**Mr. William Ladwig, RPh**  
Senior Vice President,  
Professional Services  
~ Lewis Drug

struggled with gathering all the information we needed on a consistent basis.” This made audits stressful. TCT helped the team create a standardized process for every Medicare Part B fill. Now, pharmacists use a simple form to capture all the details needed in the event of an audit and have patients sign off on it. “Having a partner, like The Compliance Team, who knows the nuances inside and out, who can break things down and explain it to you in plain language, is invaluable.”

Since then, Lewis Drug has added Long-Term Care Accreditation at various locations to support their partnerships with the local facilities they serve. This is in addition to TCT’s TelePharmacy Accreditation, explicitly designed to help pharmacies expand their reach in remote communities within state-specific regulations. Lewis Drug has earned TCT’s Exemplary Provider® status through these accreditations, demonstrating their commitment to quality and safety. “For us, being an Exemplary Provider means we’re delivering the most consistent and highest quality services possible,” explains Strobl.

## REAPING THE REWARDS OF PHARMACY ACCREDITATION

Accreditation certainly does take time and effort, but Strobl believes that not being accredited and trying to weed through standards and policies alone would be even more time-consuming. That’s why she feels having TCT’s compliance requirements written in a clear, straightforward way has been immeasurable for Lewis Drug’s small corporate team. “Knowing we can rely on their expertise means a lot to our pharmacists because they can concentrate on doing what they do best, taking care of their customers.” And it shows. Strobl says patients feel very comfortable coming into a Lewis Drug because they know pharmacists are always available to answer questions. “Our pharmacies are just getting busier and busier, and I think it’s because of the level of service our pharmacists provide – partly due to the efficiencies accreditation has afforded us.” Strobl says accreditation has also added a lot of value for the pharmacy where payers and State Boards of Pharmacy are concerned. “They know that as an accredited provider, we are already meeting many of their guidelines – and that we’re operating on a proven set of policies and best practices.”

“In the end, what TCT does for Lewis Drug,” says Strobl, “is help us put a spotlight on quality improvement. That’s exactly what I’m looking for. That’s what it’s all about for us.” She points to Medicare as an example, which requires that pharmacies document patient complaints. “The Compliance Team has helped us develop a process for gathering the information as required – through their patient satisfaction tool – but they’ve also shown us how to use the feedback as an asset to uncover opportunities to do better.”

Strobl adds that TCT also encourages the pharmacy to push the envelope with its quality improvement goals. “They dig deeper into where we are and where we want to be – even comparing quality improvement goals year after year to make sure we’re building on them.” She says this helps the pharmacy keep moving forward and stay true to its innovative nature.

## A FOOLPROOF METHOD TO PROCESS IMPROVEMENT

TCT’s programs are designed to provide third-party validation of processes based on operations-driven standards, adapted to the unique aspects of each organization’s business model. Standards are written to be easy to understand – with the objective of establishing consistency of services, processes, and quality across all of Lewis Drug’s pharmacies. This is combined with TCT’s expert implementation guidance. Together, TCT’s model and its accreditation process help pharmacies streamline operations and improve patient and staff satisfaction.

When starting an accreditation process, TCT gives pharmacies access to a dedicated portal that provides checklists and details the standards to be met. “We usually start with a self-assessment to determine what we need to focus on,” says Strobl. To help them do this, TCT offers a series

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## Benefits of Accreditation At-a-Glance

3rd Party Validation  
of Processes

Improved Operational  
Efficiency

Consistent Quality  
of Services

Improved Patient Outcomes

Increased Employee  
Satisfaction

Medicare Compliance

of tools and learning opportunities, such as accreditation webinars. Lewis Drug also has access to a dedicated accreditation expert so they can ask questions and get additional support. “Working closely with The Compliance Team throughout, we’re able to identify what we’re doing well and where we might be able to make process improvements – and map out a plan to make it happen.”

Once policies and procedures are in place, TCT conducts unannounced on-site visits to ensure Lewis Drug pharmacies adhere to all the accreditation standards. “That might be something as simple as making sure all appropriate signage is posted or that our staff have been recently trained on how to use fire extinguishers,” explains Strobl. “But The Compliance Team also confirms that policies needed for certain services are being followed and we are always compliant.” Pharmacy staff even enjoy the site visits, she adds. “Every store is very proud of how they operate and serve the community, and they look forward to showing The Compliance Team what they are doing.”

Lewis Drug maintains the standards and processes through periodic reviews with appropriate staff. This helps the pharmacy keep up with policy changes and updates where needed. Employees at every store are required to review policies annually as well to ensure they are always up-to-speed. “The Compliance Team’s approach gives us a foolproof way of ensuring we are operating up to all the appropriate standards,” Strobl explains.

## A LOOK TOWARDS PHARMACY GROWTH AND PATIENT SATISFACTION

Lewis Drug has expressed an interest in attaining additional accreditations and certifications from The Compliance Team. “We’re in the process right now of determining how other TCT programs fit into the pharmacy of the future – not only to our operation but pharmacy services in general,” explains Strobl.

This look ahead is one of the aspects the pharmacy appreciates most about TCT. “One of the reasons we chose The Compliance Team is because we felt they had very similar core values to us,” she says. “They are truly interested in helping us deliver the very best pharmacy services we can, and that adds a lot of value for our customers.”



# Go beyond ordinary. Be exemplary.

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— Jessica Strobl, PharmD and VP of Professional Services at Lewis Family Drug - 60 locations accredited for Community Pharmacy/DMEPOS



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Exemplary Care.

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Be an Exemplary  
Provider.<sup>®</sup>  
Choose TCT.

