

CASE STUDY

Empowering Long-Term Care Pharmacies Through Smarter Procurement Technology



Delivering Long-Term Care Pharmacy Services to Support Better Care



William Posten

Senior Manager of Purchasing
and Analytics

~ Guardian Pharmacy Services

INTRODUCTION AND INTENDED OUTCOME

Guardian Pharmacy Services, a leader in long-term care (LTC), provides personalized support and technology solutions to over 50 locally-managed pharmacies across the United States. Spanning from Maine to California, Guardian's pharmacies serve over 7,000 facilities and 189,000 residents in assisted living, behavioral health, post-acute care, hospice, and other complex care settings.

"We work with pharmacies by bringing them into our network and integrating them under the Guardian umbrella," explains William Posten, senior manager, purchasing operations and analytics for the company's support center. Each pharmacy is empowered to make local leadership decisions, and purchasers continue to manage the onsite, daily operations. "Our job is to set pharmacies up for success with behind-the-scenes support that simplifies medication management and lowers overall costs," says Posten.

THE CHALLENGE: COMPLEX PURCHASING AND INVENTORY MANAGEMENT

Posten explains that researching drug availability and costs is one of the biggest challenges pharmacies face, regardless of their size. "When I was a pharmacy owner myself, I could lose three or four hours a day just looking up National Drug Code (NDC) numbers on various providers' websites to access catalogs and compare prices." This tedious process required jumping between multiple websites simply to gather information. That was before even comparing products and then deciding what to purchase. "It was just incredibly time-consuming."

Finding the best drug prices every day is only part of the story. To maintain discounts on popular drugs, Guardian must also meet contractual agreements with vendors. "That's a very tough 'ask' to manage across all of our locations," says Posten. "But it's a key factor for purchasers to consider when placing orders."

Maintaining accurate inventory with manual processes is another long, slow process that can consume several hours a day. "Having a handle on inventory is more important than ever as the industry potentially faces a new round of drug shortages," Posten says.

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Those are some of the reasons Guardian implemented SureCost, a leading pharmacy procurement and inventory management software.

THE SOLUTION: SURECOST’S PROCUREMENT AND INVENTORY MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

■ SureCost Purchase Manager™

Purchase Manager is designed to give pharmacies unified access to all primary and secondary vendors as well as manufacturer catalogs through a centralized platform. Users can quickly and easily compare drug prices and availability in real time on a single screen.

The system also provides visibility into rebate structures. “As our purchasers research cost and availability, they can also see where we stand in terms of compliance on rebate thresholds before an order is submitted,” explains Posten. That means Guardian can proactively shift volumes as needed to fulfill commitments. “It’s not just about finding the cheapest drug,” says Posten. “It’s about maximizing savings by making the smartest decision — something that would be nearly impossible for me to manage across all of our locations.”

This automated process, on its own, can cut the time spent on research and submitting purchases by as much as 50% for most pharmacies. Posten also says that SureCost’s Purchase Manager supports Guardian from procurement to payment, adding even more efficiency to daily processes. That’s because Purchase Manager enables purchasers to research drug prices and view vendor and rebate tier requirements while generating a single purchase order for all vendors each day. “We’ve also built modules for our pharmacies to confirm receipt of an order and approve invoices, so our accounts payable team can process payments with confidence,” Posten explains.

■ Inventory Manager™

About half of Guardian’s pharmacies also use SureCost’s Inventory Manager, which systematically monitors both physical and perpetual inventory, transfers, and returns in real time. “The software gives our pharmacists the information they need to forecast more accurately,” says Posten. “It automatically tells them what to order and when based on dispensing data, not just purchasing history.” These capabilities reduce waste and excess inventory while minimizing the risk of out-of-stocks. Inventory Manager also improves operational efficiency by significantly cutting the time spent on manual cycle counts.

■ Data Integration and Reporting

“The beauty of both Purchase Manager and Inventory Manager is that the data integrates seamlessly with our data warehouse,” says Posten. “Having all our pharmacies in one solution allows us to aggregate data across our network and make decisions based on the best, most current information.”

Posten also appreciates the depth and efficiency of SureCost’s reporting tools. “Purchase Manager gives us access to something like 300 different reports,” he explains. “I can run reports and display them on dashboards across our network, so purchasers at each

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location are all seeing the same thing. That means I don't have multiple locations running the same report. Everything about SureCost just saves time.”

THE BENEFIT: TAILORED IMPLEMENTATION AND SUPPORT

In addition to the efficiency and value that SureCost adds to Guardian's bottom line, Posten says the ability to tailor Purchase Manager to each location is indispensable. “Not every pharmacy is the same, so trying to implement a one-size-fits-all solution would be disruptive,” he says. From NDC change thresholds to days-on-hand targets to spending caps and more, SureCost enables Guardian to customize the solution for each pharmacy.

As one example, Posten looks at pharmacies that primarily support residents at behavioral health facilities. These locations often need to dispense specific brands, leading to a below-average generic spend compared to others in the network. “SureCost allows us to set thresholds around that,” he explains. “I think of them as guardrails for individual purchasers that ensure Guardian maintains consistency and control over purchases.” Individual pharmacies can also reconfigure both Purchase Manager and Inventory Manager to meet their changing needs, including adjusting guardrails as their location develops within the network. “SureCost's flexibility and customization help me manage pharmacies from afar a lot more efficiently.”

Beyond the benefits that the solutions deliver, Posten says that the company's service truly sets them apart. “Purchase Manager is easy to use,” he says. “It's a web-based application, so anyone making a purchase online can learn to use it.” As a result, when new pharmacies or purchasers join the network, Posten and his team handle most of the training themselves. However, if they need additional support, Posten can arrange a dedicated training session with the SureCost team to guide new pharmacy staff through the system step by step. SureCost also has a dedicated team for pharmacies implementing Inventory Manager.

“SureCost even works with our vendor partners to ensure the data we're receiving is accurate and properly integrated into our data warehouse,” adds Posten. “Their customer service is just phenomenal. There's always someone available to answer my questions and questions from our individual pharmacies. I know SureCost is there for us every step of the way.”

THE IMPACT: AN ONGOING PARTNERSHIP

If there's one thing Posten would tell other pharmacies, it's that SureCost is much more than a software provider. “We have formed a true partnership, and it's been like that from the start.”

That's because SureCost is always asking questions about how they can make their solutions more useful. “And they hear what we say,” says Posten. “They've come up with some pretty unique solutions for us over the years. They're now designing a separate module to help us stay ahead of drug shortages.”

The end result is that SureCost's software has empowered Guardian to build efficiency and consistency into their network and to leverage actionable insights that streamline purchasing and inventory management. “SureCost gives our pharmacists back valuable time to more effectively meet the needs of the individuals they serve,” says Posten. “I would recommend SureCost's software solutions to any pharmacy, not just those in the LTC space.”

The Premier All-in-One
Pharmacy Procurement Software



One Procurement Platform. More Savings in Half the Time.



SAVE MORE

Save 2% on average on
COGS annual



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purchasing by 50%



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