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# BRANSON DAILY NEWS

Wednesday, June 11, 2008

## Dispensing with the wait

By Kia Stacy  
BDN Staff Writer  
kstacy@bransondailynews.com

If you have ever made a late night trip to the emergency room, chances are you will be able to appreciate the new service Skaggs Community Health Center has to offer.

Back in November, Skaggs installed the InstyMeds system in the emergency room waiting area. InstyMeds is an automated dispenser for prescription drugs and is designed to help E.R. patients who either can't wait until morning to fill their prescription or don't want to drive to Nixa to go to the only 24-hour pharmacy in the area.

"Our goal is so patients don't have to wait or go to Springfield," said Bob Campbell, Skaggs pharmacy director, adding the

InstyMeds machine holds "mostly pain medications, antibiotics, things you don't want patients to have to go through the night without having."

Here is how the system works: If an E.R. doctor prescribes medication to a patient, the patient can opt to use the InstyMeds system, in which case the physician would enter the prescription into a computer and give the patient a unique code or PIN number.

The patient would enter that number and his or her birthdate on the InstyMeds touch screen and make a payment by swiping a debit or credit card or pay with cash.

Campbell said the machine triple checks the barcoding to reduce the chance of medication errors before dispensing the prescription bottle with its patient-specific label, warnings and all.

The robotic pharmacist even keeps itself low-maintenance. The InstyMeds parent company in Minnesota keeps tabs on the machine and automatically ships the medications that need to be restocked.

But Campbell explained the InstyMeds system should not take the place of seeing one's physician. "It's not a full prescription, just a limited supply," he said. "It's just to give the patient enough medication to get them through until they can see their doctor."

The InstyMeds system is not available 24-hours a day, only during hours when a regular pharmacy is not open. The machine's operational hours are Monday through Friday from 8:30 p.m. to 7 a.m., Saturdays from 5:30 p.m. to 8 a.m. and Sunday from 5:30 p.m. to 7 a.m.



Skaggs Community Health Center Pharmacy Director Bob Campbell explains how to use the hospital's InstyMeds system, an automated drug dispenser. BDN photo by Kia Stacy