



Urgent Care Centers Offer Prescription Medication Dispensing

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"Awesome." "Amazing." "Hey, kids, we can go straight home now."

Those are some of the reactions to the newest addition at St. Anthony's Medical Center's three Urgent Care Centers, a fully-automated prescription medication dispensing system called InstyMeds.

Manufactured and monitored by a Minnesota-based company of the same name, InstyMeds allows the Urgent Care Centers to offer the top 30 to 35 prescriptions.

Patients can avoid a drive to a retail pharmacy and a wait for a prescription to be filled.

"For us, first and foremost, it's a convenience for the patient," said Mike Anderson, Director of the St. Anthony's Urgent Care Centers. "It makes us more of a one-stop shop. They can come in here for treatment, fill their prescriptions, and go home."

The computerized, ATM-style, blue machines began dispensing in September. They are stocked with prepackaged medications including a variety of antibiotics, eye drops, decongestants and antiinflammatory drugs, all dispensed via electronic prescriptions submitted by Urgent Care Center doctors. At this time, no narcotics will be offered through the machines.

From filling to dispensing, there are multiple quality controls, said Donn Richards, M.D., medical director of St. Anthony's Urgent Care. These controls ensure that the proper medication is dispensed, that an adequate stock of a given medication is on hand, and that the medication is fresh and up-to-date, he said.

"InstyMeds has a direct connection to a computer in the machine, and can monitor at all times what's going on inside that machine, which is a real safety feature," Dr. Richards said. "We're very pleased. We've got some tweaks we want to make so that it's easier for the doctors to prescribe. The patients who have used it really like it a lot."



Dr. Melissa Stein demonstrates how the InstyMed system dispenses prescription medications at St. Anthony's Urgent Care Centers.

The patient pays the standard retail price for a prescription; and if it's covered by insurance, InstyMeds submits a claim as a pharmacy would. The patient pays the co-pay or the full amount, depending on insurance, at the dispenser. The entire process takes a couple of minutes to complete. For patients with questions, a telephone with a direct line to InstyMeds customer service is located next to the dispenser.

The machines do not offer refills, and serve only urgent care patients.

"We need to find ways to innovate and to better serve patients," said Denise Kimble, R.N., manager of Arnold Urgent Care. "Medication dispensing through InstyMeds is just another tool that will enable us to compete, grow and stay in business."

St. Anthony's currently operates three urgent care centers, located at 3619 Richardson Square Drive in Arnold, 714 Gravois Road in Fenton and 2900 Lemay Ferry Road in south county. A fourth urgent care center is slated to open in the Crestwood/Kirkwood area next summer.



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