



Pharma Diversion in the Grocery Chain Pharmacies



- - - Introduction - - -

Abuse of prescription drugs is an epidemic facing this country and the world. Pill mills are popping up everywhere to seduce addicts from small town America to the big city. But it's not just the pill mills where diversion of controlled substances occurs. It happens everywhere. Even in the pharmacy located in our local grocery chains.

*Grocery chain pharmacies are not immune to the
DEA's hammer of justice*

In April 2012 the DEA seized \$581,960 from a supermarket pharmacy located in Dallas, Texas. In Missoula, MT, the DEA raided several supermarket chains in an investigation that stemmed from medical marijuana becoming available in the state. This is reminiscent of the DEA's and US Attorney's mindset, that grocery chains are not overlooked when it comes to diversion. The US Deputy Attorney General even stated, "It's time to send a message to the groceries in Montana". These are just two cases where the DEA has taken a stand in the fight against diversion. A sign that their scope is not just the big chain retail pharmacies.

Remember: where controlled substances are distributed there is a potential for diversion and a cause for the DEA to investigate.



- - - Business Protection - - -

So, what can the grocery chain pharmacy do to protect their business and reputation?

- ☐ Make sure you are operationally compliant
- ☐ Focus on the due diligence of filling prescriptions
- ☐ Know Your Customers



- - -Compliance - - -

1. Make sure, you are operationally compliant

This requires a pro-active approach to the licensing, record keeping, inventory, security, CMEA, and prescription requirements enforced by the DEA.

If these processes and procedures are not well thought out and inclusive of the regulations then it could put the pharmacy at a risk with potential reprimand from the DEA. Also, be mindful of how organized the controlled substance records are since the DEA could “dig” further if they have a sense that the records are missing, inaccurate, or incomplete.



- - - Due Diligence - - -

2. Focus on the due diligence of filling prescriptions

Your pharmacists are your line of defense against possible suspicious prescriptions. The pharmacist must do their due diligence in vetting the patients trying to fill a controlled substance prescription at the pharmacy. The pharmacist can utilize the valuable information contained in the state's Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP) to be more knowledgeable of the patient's motive.

Is the script forged? Is the patient seeing multiple doctors who unknowingly are all prescribing the same narcotics? Is the combination of medications a dangerous mix?

These questions and others can be answered and now the pharmacist can make a better decision when filling the prescription.



3. Know Your Customers

The pharmacist must build a relationship with the local doctors in the community to know if the prescription was written for a legitimate medical purpose. In fact, the Code of Federal Regulations states that the pharmacist has a corresponding responsibility in filling a prescription and that it is a felony offense for a pharmacist who knowingly fills a questionable prescription.

The DEA is spearheading their “Know Your Customer” policy at all levels of the controlled substance supply chain. This means that a pharmacist can’t rely on the fact that the doctor has an active medical license and DEA registration. Unfortunately, that’s not a viable option anymore.

The DEA expects the pharmacist to do his/her part in having a pharmacy that is both operationally compliant and that sufficient due diligence is obtained before filling a prescription.

Looking to enhance your pharmacy program for better compliance? Find out more about The Pharma Compliance Group and how our solutions are currently helping major pharma distributors, retail and grocery pharmacies remain compliant with CFR, CSA and DEA regulations.



- - - More Information - - -

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Contact: infor@theintegritygroup.com

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