

ATM pharmacy dispenses in under three minutes

Long queues for public health patients collecting chronic medication could be a thing of the past with the ATM pharmacy which delivers repeat prescriptions in under three minutes. The first such dispensing unit was launched in Alexandra in Gauteng.

The Pharmacy Dispensing Unit™ (PDU™) was developed by a team from [Right to Care](#) and [Right ePharmacy](#) in collaboration with the Gauteng Department of Health, and works like an ATM for medication, with Skype-like audio-visual interaction between patient and tele-pharmacists, cloud-based electronic software and robotic technology to dispense and label medication.

Medicine is dispensed in a simple five-step process:

- Patient scans barcode ID book, ID card or pharmacy card and enters PIN
- Patient talks to a remote pharmacist
- The prescription and or items are selected
- The medicine is robotically dispensed and labelled and drops in the collection slot
- Patient takes receipt which indicates next collection date

Improved access

“This is a great step forward for patients in our city as it dramatically reduces waiting times and congestion in public healthcare facilities. In Alex, there are eight primary healthcare clinics in the vicinity which refer patients.

“The system is run by qualified pharmacists and pharmacy assistants and integrates with the clinical management of patients with chronic conditions at public facilities. It also supports adherence. The date for the next collection is shown on the receipt the patient receives when collecting medication and prescription collection reminders are sent by SMS. Late collections are immediately flagged for follow up. It also offers patients service in all eleven languages and there is support at the site to help patients deal with the technology,” says Gwen Ramokgopa, Gauteng health MEC.

Alexandra Plaza, where the unit is located, is a central community shopping centre which is on transport routes and it is open on weekends and public holidays. Sites in Diepsloot and two sites in Soweto have also been selected for the pilot of this public pharmacy programme.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>