

WCGH's innovative solution to chronic medicine dispensing

The Western Cape Government Health (WCGH) Chronic Dispensary Unit (CDU) in Parow, Cape has been upgraded with a bespoke automated chronic medicine dispensing, sorting and parcel assembly line. The world-class system was specially designed to fulfil the specific and stringent requirements of the WCGH for preparing and despatching almost 400,000 patient-ready medicine parcels for individuals across the province each month and has additional capacity to service more patients as required.



Bernhard Githundi, a patient at Hornlee Clinic in Knysna gets his medication delivered from the Chronic Dispensary Unit.

"The effectiveness of the CDU underpins the service we are able to provide, not only for those patients receiving their chronic medication parcels from medicine collection points but also through assisting to free up capacity in our walk-in pharmacies at hospitals and clinics for individuals who require acute medicines or who may need face-to-face consultations with pharmacists," said WCGH Head of Department Dr Beth Engelbrecht at a site inspection of the facility.

Innovations inherent in the automated system include optimal accuracy, enhanced process efficiency with faster turnaround times, and minimisation of waste. Additional safety measures include pharmacists conducting a blind checking process, aided by the software program whereby the original prescription is compared to the one captured on the system. Strict patient confidentiality is maintained to protect the privacy of individuals making use of the service.

"The reduced waiting times and enhanced operational efficiencies that highly innovative systems such as this are able to achieve meaningfully contribute to the quality of care individual patients are receiving, as well as extending access to more people," she said.

Sustainability

The CDU has been designed with environmental sustainability in mind. The site runs exclusively on borehole water, which is filtered and treated to well within the standards for potable water, thereby reducing demand on municipal water supplies.

A number of power-efficient features are included in the design of the plant, including a highly efficient heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC) system, a fully insulated building for temperature regulation, as well as LED internal and external lighting fixtures, many of which are motion-sensor controlled.

"This aspect of health service delivery promotes convenient access to life-saving chronic medication, which in turn assists individuals to comply with their prescribed chronic treatment. The CDU is therefore helping to improve the health of the people of the Western Cape through contributing to better health outcomes for patients in the province," said Noel Guliwe, chief executive officer of Medipost Holding, which has partnered with WCGH on the project.

The CDU directly employs 100 people, the majority having been recruited from the Parow Industria and surrounding areas. Of these staff members, a number have been enrolled with the Medi Training Academy where they are studying to become basic and post-basic pharmacist's assistants. This training initiative aims to address a shortage of scarce skill sets in healthcare, both nationally and within the province. Outsourced services, including cleaning, canteen facilities and waste management, have also contributed to job creation in the area.

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