

Stock Control & Ordering

part I.



Introduction

One of most important functions in a community pharmacy is to supply your customers promptly - whether it be a sale or a dispensed medicine. This means that the items have to be in stock. Although it would be great to have every item that could possibly be prescribed on your dispensary shelves, first you wouldn't have the space and second your pharmacy couldn't afford it. Stock costs money, and in a pharmacy it will usually form the single biggest asset. Stock ties up a great deal of capital. For this reason, pharmacy managers will try to keep the stock level down while trying not to run out of items. For many prescription items this can be achieved because wholesalers deliver at least once or twice a day. Ideally every item of stock in your dispensary should be looked at critically and an appropriate stock level decided on.

What factors do you think are important in deciding on the level of stock for an item?

- How often the item is used. This could be one tube of cream a day; six inhalers a day; a 500 bottle of tablets each week; a 2 litre bottle of liquid every 2 months
- Which wholesaler(s) you order from and how often the item can be ordered. You may be able to order most branded medicines once a day if not twice or three times a day. But you may have a generic order once or twice a week. Some stoma care items may take two or three days.
- The shelf-life of the item. It is obviously not a good idea to keep large stocks of slow-moving short-dated items.
- Drugs those are misused. It may not be wise to keep in large stocks of drugs subject to misuse – this includes Controlled Drugs.
- Bulky items e.g. sterile dressing packs, colostomy bags, large packs of cotton wool etc. You probably haven't got enough room for large stocks.

Many computers help you to set your stock levels. Computers can be set to order automatically, although you can order items manually too. Your computer may have some items on "automatic" and some lines on "manual" ordering. For items ordered automatically your computer has a minimum level in its memory and if your stock falls below that minimum level, say six salbutamol inhalers, your computer automatically puts more on order. If your use of certain items changes, say a new doctor prescribes different items, then you may have to change the set stock levels on your computer. For example, he may prescribe more terbutaline and fewer salbutamol inhalers. So you may need to reset your minimum levels of salbutamol to three and your minimum levels of terbutaline to six.

Who Do You Order From?

The need to order an item can happen through either routine use or from a specific request for an item not in stock, e.g. an unusual prescription item. **The reason for the order and the speed with which you need it will influence your ordering process, particularly who you order from, bearing in mind also:**

- How often the pharmacy generally place orders with the wholesaler?
- How often and which days of the week they deliver?
- Which wholesaler is used for which types of item, e.g. generics, dressings?

Other factors governing the choice of wholesalers include:

- Delivery times and order dead-lines (When is the dead-line for same day delivery?)
- How far in advance the orders need to be placed?
- Method of ordering, e.g. is it automated? Can the pharmacy computer be linked directly by modem to the wholesaler? Do you have to phone orders through? Does the wholesaler phone you?
- Reliability for having items in stock.
- Prices, discounts and dates for paying invoices.

Few pharmacies order directly from manufacturers on a regular basis. They prefer to keep stocks low and order "little and often" from local wholesalers. However, the advantage of ordering from manufacturers direct is that they sometimes offer better deals and bonuses - like 12 packs for the price of 10. Companies often offer these sorts of deals through your wholesaler - so giving your pharmacist the best of both worlds.

Ordering Stock

Many pharmacies these days order stock via their computers. Your computer is likely to allow you to order stock in three ways:

- Automatically while dispensing (as described above)
- Manually during labelling
- Manually outside of the labelling process

Ordering manually on the computer may involve typing the first three or four letters of the drug name or some sort of a code, e.g. the Pharmaceutical Interface Product (PIP) code which is seven numbers and unique to each product, or the wholesaler's order number. There will also be a facility for amending orders – say if you have ordered too much of an item or too little of the wrong item.

If you have more than one supplier, your computer may be automatically linked to one supplier or another. With some systems you may have to do this for yourself, i.e. decide which supplier you wish to order from. **Orders can generally be transmitted in one of two ways:**

- Via a modem from computer or another type of terminal
- Phoning an order through manually

If a product is not available, you should:

- Check if it is required urgently for a patient, if so
- Check with the supplier, when it is due in

If there is a long-term problem it may be necessary for the pharmacist to discuss an alternative with the GP.



Mgr. Miloš Wiesinger,
 MRPharmS
 Lékárna Europea,
 Banská Bystrica

VOCABULARY WITH FREE TRANSLATION

Items that have to be in stock.

Položky, ktoré musia byť na sklade.

Keep the stock level down while trying not to run out of items.

Udržuj čo najnižšie zásoby, pritom sa snaž aby si nemal nedostatok položiek.

Wholesalers deliver at least once or twice a day.

Distribútor robí donášku minimálne raz alebo dva krát denne.

What is the manufacturer, wholesaler and pharmacy price of this medicine?

Aká je cena tohto lieku od výrobcu, distribútora a lekárne?

How many items are used a day, a week, a month?

Koľko položiek sa vyexpeduje za deň, týždeň, mesiac?

Is the item short supplied or often out of stock?

Je táto položka na minimálnej zásobe (u distribútora) alebo býva často nedostupná?

Where we obtain the item from?

Kde, od koho môžeme túto položku zohnať?

Where is this item stored in the dispensary?

Kde sa táto položka skladuje v dispenzáriu?

How bulky the item is?

Aká veľká (objemná) je táto položka?

Is it a fridge line item?

Skladuje sa táto položka v chladničke?

Is it a controlled drug?

Je to kontrolovaný liek (opiát)?

What is the expiry date / the shelf-life of the item?

Aká je expirácia, životnosť tejto položky?

Computers help you to set the right stock levels.

Počítače pomáhajú nastaviť správne množstvo zásob.

You have to reset your minimum levels of salbutamol inhalers.

Musíš si nastaviť (zmeniť) minimálnu zásobu salbutamolových inhalátorov.

How often the pharmacy generally place orders with this wholesaler?

Ako často lekáreň objednáva u tohto distribútora?

How often and which days of the week they deliver?

Ako často a ktoré dni v týždni robia donášku?

Which wholesaler is used for dressings?

Ktorý distribútor nám dodáva obvazy?

When is the dead-line for same day delivery?

Kedy (čas) je posledný termín na dodanie objednávky v ten istý deň?

How far in advance the order need to be placed to get it next day?

V akom predstihu musí byť podaná objednávka pre nasledujúci deň?

This item must be ordered directly from manufacturer.

Táto položka musí byť objednaná priamo cez výrobcu.

Product is recently not available – manufacturer cannot supply.

Produkt je v súčasnosti nedostupný – výrobca ho nemôže dodať.

Production of this medicine is discontinued.

Výroba tohto lieku je ukončená.

Check with the supplier, when this item is due in.

Skontroluj dodávateľa, kedy im má prísť táto položka.