

## Instant Medication Dispensing is Now Available to Patients Before They Leave the Physician Office

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Imagine this very common scenario: A child becomes ill and needs to see a doctor. A parent drives him or her to the doctor's office. The doctor examines the child and assures the parent they will be fine after a course of antibiotics. With prescription in hand, mom or dad gets in the car again to make their way to the drug store where there is a significant wait. By the time the sick child makes it home and is able to take the medicine they need

to feel better, it has been hours.

Now imagine a different story. In this story, parents avoid the drive and subsequent wait at the drug store. Instead, they walk out of the doctor's office with the medication their child needs. No long drive to the drug store with a sick child. No long lines. No waiting for the medication.

At Molina Medical, our patients don't need to imagine anymore. In order to provide just this type of convenient access to prescription medications, Molina Medical is now offering patients instant medication fills before they leave the physician's office. A partnership with InstyMeds has enabled Molina to be the first medical group in the country to offer fully automated prescription drug services to Medicaid managed care patients.

Onsite prescription services are rarely available in single or solo physician practices. Even for commercial insurance patients this type of benefit is rare. Patients normally would only have access to instant

medications in a pharmacy as part of a larger medical complex setting. When you or your children are ill, the last thing you want to think about is finding a pharmacy to fill a prescription.

In order to access the new program, Molina patients arrive for their physician appointment and are registered into the medication system where a sticker is affixed to their card. If the physician decides that the patient needs medicine for an acute condition, the physician is able to electronically prescribe it and check for drug interactions. The patient is given a voucher with a unique security code and before the patient leaves the medical office, the robotic machine performs a triple bar code safety check, labels the drug, and dispenses the prescribed medication from the ATM-style machine for the patient.

Studies show that between 20-30% of prescriptions that physicians write go unfilled. The new system increases the likelihood that the patient will fill their prescription and undergo the physician's medi-

cal treatment plan. In a recent New England Journal of Medicine study, researchers reported that patients who fail to take their drugs result in hospital stays costing \$100 billion a year – hospital stays that could have been averted.

A large portion of our physicians' time is spent educating the patient about an illness or disease and about the consequences of not taking prescribed medications. The new medication system will mean better patient compliance. In addition, our low income patients sometimes have difficulty finding reliable transportation to the pharmacy. Now, getting their medications here

is easy and convenient. It will mean getting the first dose sooner and quicker improvement.

Molina has installed medication dispensers in its South Everett clinic in Washington state and in other clinics across the country. And over the next several months, Molina hopes to offer this option to cash patients too. The service is only available to Molina Healthcare of Washington members now and only covers medications for acute conditions.

*Gloria Calderon is responsible for strengthening and growing the Molina Healthcare-owned and operated primary care clinics. She was*

*with Molina Healthcare from 1989 to 1998 where in addition to working on the clinic development, she also was the director of provider services and contracting for the California health plan and assisted in the development of the Utah and Michigan health plans. She left Molina for a period to join Pacific Hospital in Long Beach. Before returning to Molina, Calderon held several positions at the hospital including vice president of contracting and clinic operations, chief operating officer of West Coast surgery centers, chief operations officer of Pacific Specialty Physician Management and vice president of business development.*



*Molina Medical office medical assistant Lisette Perez helps patient Valerie Escobar fill her son's prescription from the automated medication dispensing equipment at one of the Molina Medical offices. Pictured with Valerie are her son Juan (in her arms), and son Danny and daughter Elizabeth look on.*

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