

Tips for renovating to automate

Written by Wayne Caverly on November 8, 2010 for CanadianHealthcareNetwork.ca

Tips on installing a Pac med machine for unit dose and renovating a compounding area.

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Question: We are planning on installing a Pac med machine for unit dose as well as renovating our sterile/non-sterile compounding area. Any tips?

Answer: Your question is quite broad in scope, therefore my reply will necessarily mirror that.

First, you need to ensure you (and/or your designer) fully understand the physical requirements of any equipment you will be installing. The Pacmed (for example) does not necessarily require access from the sides, but if the sides can be kept accessible, it makes cleaning and maintenance much easier.

There are also space requirements around the Pacmed for when the front door is fully opened to access the printer. If you don't plan for this space, it could disrupt the pharmacy whenever paper or other consumables are replaced or when the machine is being serviced.

Second, you (and your designer) must understand that technology affects the workflow in the pharmacy. It would be a mistake to simply find room in the existing layout where the Pacmed will "fit". Instead the overall design of your facility should be reviewed to ensure proper workflow as you move from manual packaging to high-speed automation.

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While looking at the overall design don't forget to plan for potential future items. As your business grows you may need to plan for a second Pacmed machine. There are also new technologies that provide verification of the completed strips, substantially reducing pharmacist involvement. These should be planned into your space even if their purchase might only be in a couple of years.

Finally, from a timing perspective, you should be prepared to bring all staff in after-hours once new equipment is installed to go through product training. You should also begin thinking about who would be the best staff member to become your point person for the new technology. This person would obtain more detailed training so they can handle most minor issues and be the liaison with customer service.

Hope that helps, and good luck with the upgrades to your business.
