Special *PP&P* Buyer's Guide:
Automated Dispensing Cabinets

WHILE NO ONE METHOD FOR MEDICATION DISTRIBUTION WORKS for every facility, implementing automated dispensing cabinets as part of a decentralized or hybrid medication distribution system can improve patient safety and the accountability of your inventory, streamline certain billing processes, and, ultimately, lead to increased nursing and patient satisfaction.

Because automated dispensing cabinets track user access and dispensed medications, their use can improve your control over your drug inventory. The real-time inventory reports generated by many cabinets can simplify the fill process and help pharmacy track expired drugs. Furthermore, by restricting individual drugs – such as high-risk medications and controlled substances – to unique drawers within the cabinet, you can improve your overall inventory management, patient safety, and medication security. Of further benefit to your patient safety bottom line, automated dispensing cabinets allow the pharmacy department to profile physician orders before they are dispensed.

Automated cabinets can also enable providers to capture medication charges upon dispensing, reducing the billing paperwork pharmacy is responsible for. In addition, nurses can note returned medications using the cabinets' computers, enabling direct credits to patients' accounts.

In theory, because automated dispensing cabinets make drugs available on the nursing unit floor, nursing will have speedier access to a patient's medications. Decreased wait time can lead to less frustration on the part of your nursing staff and to improved patient comfort and care.

In selecting automated dispensing cabinets for your facility, there are several considerations to make. First, determine what drugs will be dispensed from the cabinets. If you plan to store only PRN medications and narcotics in the cabinets, your most important goals will be the security, accountability, and availability of doses; line-item capacity will not be the most important consideration. For this dispensing model, consider a cabinet with fewer drawers or pockets, but one with locked, lidded, or other types of restricted-access drawers to provide controlled-substance security. If you plan to dispense all patient medications from your automated cabinets, consider a device with numerous drawers and pockets. In this instance, restricted-access drawers can also ensure that nurses pick the right medication from the cabinet's potentially extensive inventory.

In addition, it is important to evaluate the cabinet's reporting capabilities. Concise inventory reports can help streamline pharmacy's inventory management tasks and identify possible cases of drug diversion. You should also research the vendor's track record; make sure their cabinets are not prone to extensive periods of system down time and that they are responsive in providing customer service.

Following are descriptions of a majority of the automated dispensing cabinets currently available in the market. To request more information on a particular product listed in the buyer's guide, simply circle its corresponding reader service number on PP&P's free reader service card (bound in every issue).

◀◀ AmerisourceBergen Technology Group
Customizable and modular, MedSelect medication cabinets can store active data and transactions for five years, enabling health systems to search for medication usage trends and outliers. In addition, customizable alerts help the pharmacy control medication usage. The available DrugPoints database from Thomson Micromedex puts medication information at the nurse's fingertips at the MedSelect display terminal, and a biometric scanner can increase security and save time during login. A bar code scanner helps expand tracking and accurately confirm inventories. MedSelect also offers single-dose dispensing for increased inventory control. MedSelect's Resource Data Center – the functional core operating system – runs on Oracle 9i and a Windows 2003 server, allowing the IT department to manage virus protection centrally. The MedSelect line also includes SupplySelect automated supply dispensing and management cabinets, Centrack automated narcotics management, and Examiner data analysis and reporting tools. MedSelect's cabinets are linked to a centralized database network that tracks cabinet inventory, usage by patient, usage by provider, and other critical data.

▶ For more information, circle reader service number 32 or visit www.medselect.com.

◀◀ Cardinal Health
The Pyxis MedStation 3000 automated medication management system offers communication and workflow-optimization tools to help nursing, pharmacy, and clinicians work collaboratively in their efforts to deliver safe, high-quality patient care. Secure stations and auxiliaries are available in a variety of sizes and configurations, with drawers that offer single line-item access and single-dose dispensing.

▶ For more information, circle reader service number 31 or visit www.cardinalhealth.com/pyxis.

◀◀ Cardinal Health

The Pyxis CIISafe system can streamline and improve documentation of controlled substances, and significantly reduce the time and expense of meeting JCAHO standards and government regulations, by eliminating time-consuming and error-prone manual recordkeeping. You can check inventory and retrieve information on individual transactions with just a few keystrokes, helping you pinpoint discrepancies or diversions. In addition, the Pyxis CIISafe system connects with the Pyxis MedStation system to provide hospital-wide management of controlled substances.

▶ For more information, circle reader service number 28 or visit www.cardinalhealth.com/pyxis.

◀◀ medDISPENSE

medDISPENSE produces two types of dispensing automation: Base Units and Auxiliary Units. Nurses use Base Units, which feature a computer and touch screen, to pull patient medications and control any attached Auxiliary Units. Base Units are available in three models: Base 25, Base 45, Base 72, named according to their number of drawers. medDISPENSE's line of Auxiliary Units consists of the Combo Tower, with 45 standard drawers and 5.6 cubic feet of shelved bulk, and the Supply Tower, with 11.2 cubic feet of shelved bulk storage space. In addition to the equipment listed above, medDISPENSE also offers a refrigerated unit, Half Combo and Half Supply towers for specialty use, and double-width drawers for high-volume line items.

▶ For more information, circle reader service number 6 or visit www.med-dispense.com.

◀◀ McKesson Automation

The ergonomically designed AcuDose-Rx unit-based cabinet system features a 15-inch touch screen flat-panel color monitor, which provides large, easy-to-read text and familiar icons, helping nurses access the right medications faster. AcuDose-Rx also includes an override system, configurable warning indicators for drug classes and allergies, tall-man lettering to prevent look-alike/sound-alike drug errors, and a drug information library, aiding compliance with JCAHO and state regulations. AcuDose-Rx can also store up to 432 line items in individually locked pockets.

AcuDose-Rx integrates with McKesson's suite of medication safety solutions, including Connect-RN for medication retrieval, Horizon Admin-Rx for medication administration, NarcStation to automatically manage controlled substances, MedDirect to provide override alerts and notifications, ROBOT-Rx and MedCarousel for automated cabinet fill, and Fulfill-Rx for optimizing medication cabinet inventory.

▶ For more information, circle reader service number 33 or visit www.mckessonautomation.com

◀◀ MTS Medication Technologies

The MedLocker Medication Management System offers secure and affordable emergency and first dose medication administration in long-term care (LTC) facilities. The MedLocker system uses secured cabinets in conjunction with bar coded compliance packaging and inventory management software to facilitate the process of remote medication storage and access. The MedLocker system assists pharmacies in improving their response time when filling emergency and first dose prescriptions.

▶ For more information, circle reader service number 34 or visit www.mts-mt.com.

◀◀ Omnicell

OmniRx medication dispensing cabinets come in a variety of sizes, with a range of drawer types. The cabinets also feature biometric ID security systems and single-dose dispensing capabilities for increased security and inventory control. Bar code scanning features verify the identity and location of a medication, and "guiding light" technology directs the user to the correct medication during dispensing and restocking. The cabinets are integrated with a Web browser for clinical reference information and patient medication profiling.

▶ For more information, circle reader service number 35 or visit www.omnicell.com