Wolters Kluwer

Clinical Drug Information

Switching to Medi-Span® Clinical Promotes Ease of Use for Both Pharmacy Application Developer and Its Clients

CLIENT PROFILE:
Computer-Rx

When the time came for Computer-Rx, a software solutions developer, to start work on enhancements to its pharmacy management platform, the team knew they wanted to provide customers with the best possible user experience. It turns out, a part of the solution meant creating a better user experience for the internal development team as well.

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> – Billy Miller
> Vice President of Technology,
> Computer-Rx

The Computer-Rx development team opted to upgrade the drug data within their application to Medi-Span Clinical, a modern, modular data platform based on application programming interfaces (APIs), rather than less flexible flat data files. The decision proved to be a positive one, says Billy Miller, Computer-Rx's Vice President of Technology.

"Ease of use is a big deal for our customers," Miller says. "A lot of that is on us and how we're presenting the information. Users having the pertinent information at their fingertips at the time they are dispensing or reviewing medications has been somewhat of a hurdle for us, as far as navigating how we've implemented the flat files. Being able to consume the APIs means easier integration and making the calls when and how we need to. It's going to be valuable to us."

THE API ADVANTAGE

The decision to switch was motivated in part by customer interest in potential new features for the Computer-Rx application and in part by the team's desire to have a more efficient process for consuming, presenting, and maintaining the data, Miller says.

Computer-Rx has been using Medi-Span drug data from Wolters Kluwer in its solutions for more than ten years, although through flat file delivery. While Computer-Rx and its customers were pleased with the drug content, the legacy data format had become increasingly tedious to deal with, requiring the team to convert Medi-Span files into Computer-Rx files before sending them out to customers for use.

"That put a lot of overhead and burden on us to retain the true pharmacy knowledge and make sure the (file's intended data) process was working right," Miller says. "Being able to move on to the next level let us put more of that burden on Medi-Span."

As Computer-Rx began to enhance its pharmacy management system, the timing was right for a drug data upgrade. The company made the decision to switch to Medi-Span Clinical. The API-based data platform provides easier implementation and maintenance, as well as a modular structure designed to evolve and grow with its user's business going forward.

With Medi-Span Clinical as the drug data backbone of the system, "it's giving us the

ability to consume a lot more information from Medi-Span, and make it available to our customers, than in the past," Miller explains.

Miller cites a variety of examples of content access that was enhanced by the switch to Medi-Span Clinical:

- The breakdown of therapeutic classes is more detailed, enhancing the pharmacists' ability to recommend safe, effective medication therapies for patients.

- New drug information and drug interaction display screens feature more detailed Medi-Span information pulled verbatim from the API that feature more detailed Medi-Span information, which was difficult to pull from the flat file, directly from the API to help connect pharmacists to the information they seek to make better informed medication decisions for the benefit of the patients they serve.

- Allergy, drug-to-drug interaction, and disease state contraindication screening results are easier to understand and displayed in a more "visually appealing" way, helping reduce potential for harmful medication errors.

- Quick access to equivalency information for brand/generic substitutions helps save time and, potentially, costs.

- Access to a larger knowledge base of Medi-Span drug information covers more products, so pharmacists can easily convert nearly any electronic prescription to an equivalent in-stock drug.

- MedGuides and patient-facing information are directly accessible from the Medi-Span API, no longer requiring Computer-Rx to pull the information from different and potentially inconsistent sources, to help encourage patient compliance.

Computer-Rx customers require "certain data points," Miller says, as well as tools to address "pop-up fatigue, presenting information according to what the end user wants for their experience and configuring the alerts and warnings to what they want in their system." The Medi-Span Clinical platform has built-in user controls that professionals may utilize for alert management at the site, group, or individual levels, as well as consolidated alerts to help optimize pharmacy decision support pop-ups. Less intrusive, more targeted alerts are more useful for professionals, and thus, more likely to help them work more efficiently and enhance patient care.

DON'T FEAR THE SWITCH

Switching to a new drug data platform is not a decision any application developer takes lightly.

"We were a little hesitant because it's a big change," Computer-Rx software developer Philip Beam admits. "But it ended up not being that difficult because Medi-Span provides libraries. We used the .Net library and hooked directly into that. It's actually fairly easy to implement compared to the flat files, which we had to read and interpret ourselves."

Beam, who oversaw the upgrade from flat files to implementing Medi-Span Clinical APIs, notes that much of the Medi-Span drug information was "in some form or fashion available" through the previous flat file system, but required "digging in and understanding where those were, as opposed to just being able to pull them from the API integration. It's, in my opinion, night-and-day different."

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> Software Developer,
> Computer-Rx

While the implementation guidelines and Medi-Span Clinical Installer tool made Beam's job easier, it didn't mean the process was without questions or a few bumps in the road. That's when Beam turned to the Wolters Kluwer Customer Experience team for assistance, which for Medi-Span, includes both basic and advanced technical support, as well as dedicated implementation support.

"They answered all our questions," Beam says. "We even had some phone calls to get things squared away with the programming. I thought it went very well."

Miller agrees, noting that in-person meetings with Wolters Kluwer representatives and collaboration between technical teams helped Computer-Rx better understand its options and navigate the complex implementation process more efficiently and effectively.

"Our upgrades have a strict timeline," Beam says, "But I think the implementation of the drug data piece went quicker than we expected. It was mostly figuring out how it fit into our application. As far getting the information from Medi-Span, it was fairly easy."

"The documentation to support that was pretty straightforward, which I think helped that process a lot," Miller adds.

FUTURE OF PHARMACY

The Computer-Rx team is looking forward to collecting feedback on the upgrades they're making to their platform. And they're already investigating ways to further expand their drug information offerings.

"It's going to be very nice to show we can display new drugs right away whether it's a maintenance med or not, the equivalency rating, equivalent drugs, and active and inactive ingredients. I think that's going to be very beneficial to our customers," Miller says.

With the more advanced platform in place, Computer-Rx is well-positioned to add future medication decision support innovations. Medi-Span Clinical's modular structure enables quick addition of new APIs as they become available, significantly shortening development time and helping the company stay on the forefront of providing an easy-to-use, efficient, and effective pharmacy management platform for its internal constituents and customers. "It's beneficial for customers and for tech teams," says Miller.

About Computer-Rx

Computer-Rx provides pharmacies with proven pharmacy management software and services to help promote pharmacy growth and efficiency. Computer-Rx's driving passion for more than 30 years has been to partner with community pharmacies to improve patient health. It cultivates a customer-focused approach while continually growing and evolving products and services to offer pharmacies the technology, services, and support they need to succeed.

For more information, visit www.computer-rx.com.

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