



Kerr Drug Finds Online Learning the Prescription for Tech Training Success

Pharmacy Technicians University Helps Kerr Increase Pharm: Tech Ratios, Improve Care Delivery, and Achieve 92% Certification Rate

By Joseph P. Gibson

Sr. Manager of Training & Recruiting
KERR DRUG

Three years ago Kerr Drug had about 80 specially trained PTCB (Pharmacy Technician Certification Board) pharmacy technicians behind the counters of our state-wide North Carolina drugstore chain. Today, we have well over 200—adding to our high level of service, while lowering our staffing costs. Our techs are extremely knowledgeable about procedures, have mastered a full range of compliance and HIPAA issues, and view their working hours as careers and not just jobs. They are competent, efficient, and genuinely interested in taking care of our customers, representing Kerr at its best.

To achieve all this, initially Kerr explored in-house training through study manuals, in-store instruction, and informal testing. But this was slow-going, and the results were decidedly unsatisfactory. Instead, our prescription for success came in the form of a specialized outside pharmacy resource with a single, comprehensive platform that met all of our training and informational needs. Known for the outstanding quality of its interactive modules, it provided a one-stop-shop for a wide range of highly effective training materials tailored to our needs.



SIXTY YEARS SERVING NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITIES

For more than 60 years, Kerr Drug has proudly served the needs of North Carolina residents in both small towns and larger cities throughout the state. We are a retail drug store with a broad product mix and a strong emphasis on health and wellness. We support a busy in-store pharmacy department, complemented in some locations by drive-through service. For us, “Developing a Healthy Relationship” is more than just a corporate slogan. It is a true commitment that applies to both our customers and associates, building a cycle of positive reinforcement and results. As corporate training and recruiting director, I take particular pride in realizing this commitment and have made it a very personal goal.

Three years ago, we wanted to expand our staff of PTCB technicians to provide our customers with the benefits of more knowledgeable and efficient behind-the-counter staff. At the same time, this would allow us more latitude in our pharmacist to technician ratios. The state of North Carolina restricts us to no more than two technicians for each pharmacist on duty, unless techs are certified. With certification and state board approval, our ratios can go as high as 3:1 or 4:1.

At that time, we had a roster of about 600 full- and part-time technicians statewide with about 13 % holding national certification. In city locations, our techs often enrolled in a community college PTCP certification program. However, because many of our stores are in rural areas or

small towns, often these educational resources are not available. Helping our staff through the certification process seemed the most prudent step, but unfortunately was easier said than done. The written training materials we offered met our needs as far as providing a training program, but did little in our efforts in increasing our number of certified technicians. This effort was followed by live onsite training, including one-on-one instruction—but progress was frustratingly slow.

ONLINE PTCB TRAINING TO THE RESCUE

Prior to this, we had been taking advantage of some of the resources offered by Therapeutic Research Center (TRC) including *Pharmacist's Letter* and *Pharmacy Technician's Letter*. Both of these resources provide our staff with up-to-the-minute peer-reviewed newsletters, online CE courses, and other specialized pharmacy tools to improve quality of care through information, education, and compliance. When we learned about its innovative *Pharmacy Technicians University* (PTU), an in-depth program of online certification classes that went beyond text-based learning to provide interactive modules, we had to check it out. PTU helped our techs not only pass the exam, but truly master the content. It also helped Kerr Drug bring structure and accountability, balanced with a healthy measure of creativity and even entertainment, to the learning experience. Bottom line...PTU provided something really unique that few, if any, drug chains would be able to develop and maintain in-house. Just updating lessons with the rapidly changing state requirements would have been a full-time job itself.

PTU key features that really resonated with our staff were the educational program series of computerized learning modules that include animated concepts, review games, virtual prescriptions, interactive case studies, and more. Participants had to demonstrate proficiency in each unit through simple online testing before they could move on to the next. The goal was not to simply obtain a passing grade, but to also generate engagement in the learning process and develop a true commitment to mastering the material. The program really is extremely comprehensive and well-devised. From instruction to results reporting, it also is virtually turnkey and very

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flexible. Techs take part in the training on a designated computer station in each store as their schedule allows. Their progress and scores are automatically stored to the system. At Kerr, our educational material downloads automatically from the PL central server as needed so that participants can work smoothly onsite.

When we launched the program, we considered an 80% PTCB pass rate satisfactory. However, during the past three years, an impressive 92% of our techs have succeeded in

passing the exam. And that's not all. PTU has helped us increase our tech to pharmacist ratios. In many of our stores, we have applied to the North Carolina Board of Pharmacy for the expansion of tech to pharmacist ratios to 3:1 or even 4:1. Where already approved, the staffing has worked extremely well. Often, it eliminates bringing in a part-time pharmacist during peak hours at significant added cost. It genuinely has affected our bottom line.

Perhaps more significantly, PTU has helped us provide our techs with a skill set they will have for rest of their lives; to become competent people working with our customers and doing things within the guidelines of the law. Quite frankly, the results are astonishing. Store leadership is extremely enthusiastic about the program.

VITAL ONGOING EDUCATION DIRECT TO THE PC

As anyone in the pharmacy world knows however, initial training and certification is only the beginning. Ongoing education for all behind-the-counter staff is a requirement in most states, and North Carolina is no exception. States requirements for certification grow every day for both pharmacists and techs—not to mention that all programs must also address the latest issues in compliance; HIPAA; fraud, waste, and abuse; and more.

Prior to our partnership with Therapeutic Research Center, a major stumbling block to the success of our in-house training had been our reliance on pharmacists in each location to serve as our trainers. Naturally, training requires skill and commitment—which comes more

MASTER SKILLS WITH VISUAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Table Of Contents
Slide Title
Tech Tips
Pacing Question 8
True False Question 2
True False Question 3
Common Corticosteroids
Flashcards: Inhaled and Intr...
Learning Activity: Corticoste...
Learning Activity: Corticoste...
Key Points Recap – Corticost...
Leukotriene Modifiers
Leukotriene Modifiers
Tech Tips
Pacing Question 9

Learning Activity: Corticosteroids

In this learning exercise, you will match the following variety of medications with its appropriate classification. Drag and drop the medication to its classification.



Nasal Corticosteroid

Asmanex



Inhaled Corticosteroid

naturally to some than others. Therefore, the impact of our spiral-bound educational booklets and hard copy tests were truly hard to measure. We simply could not verify that pharmacists provided adequate guidance and that the test taker actually read the book and devoted sufficient time and thought to it. The in-house program certainly paled in comparison to the PTU effort, which requires no external oversight and provides true accountability through measurable results.

But our efforts didn't stop there. Prior to utilizing PTU, we had also partnered with *Pharmacist's Letter* to use a number of its standard CE courses and training programs, and even worked with TRC to develop customized, Kerr-branded learning modules. Kerr's customized modules utilize graphic presentations with voice-over and are also delivered online. When we rolled out a mobile prescription app for customers, we wanted to make the most of this investment and train our staff as

expert users. Again, Therapeutic Research Center created and delivered a presentation with screenshots, engaging dialogue, and even a quiz at the conclusion to make sure staff had absorbed all the messaging. These customized learning modules have also been very successful. I cannot speak more highly of the dedicated team at Therapeutic Research Center who worked with us to further our goals and make this a reality.

IMPROVED QUALITY OF CARE

All-in-all, amassing the broad range of material Therapeutic Research Center offers from multiple sources would be almost impossible, and updating it to reflect the most current industry information and compliance issues is a task best left to specialists.

The benefit of one-stop shopping is enormous. All programs are part of a unified platform that tracks staff completion and successful concept mastery as measured by test results. It's phenomenal. We

can even easily run reports on any aspect of the program, from tech certification training and state-mandated education, to CE courses and Kerr's own educational efforts.

Additionally, all material is delivered in a consistent format with a similar user interface, making participation easy. When staff completes a course, users always know how to print out their certificate, and we can archive all of the backup data. Therapeutic Research Center offers a great combination of products.

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But, training is a people business with a goal of improving the lives of associates and the customers they serve. The Center's products and services have helped us provide meaningful careers to our associates, deliver quality associates to our stores and customers, meet our business objectives, and most importantly...improve the quality of care we deliver. To me, that is the most satisfying part. As a trainer for nearly 30 years, that's what I care about most. These tools have helped me accomplish this relatively easily and highly effectively. For that, I am grateful.