



# DOES YOUR DESIGN CAUSE WORKFLOW HEADACHES?

Introducing the first in our new Design Challenge series

*In this new series, we will assist readers with their pharmacy design and workflow issues. We encourage you to send us your floor plans (whether professional or simple sketches) along with photos and a description of the issue(s) you are facing.*

**OUR FIRST SUBMISSION** is a proposed design for a new medical centre pharmacy that displays one of the most common errors made in pharmacy design—guiding people to the wrong place!

When a patient enters the pharmacy they should be directed—naturally—to the reception (Rx In) counter. As you can see from this layout, whether the patient enters this pharmacy from the street or from the clinic, they will naturally start out at the cash.

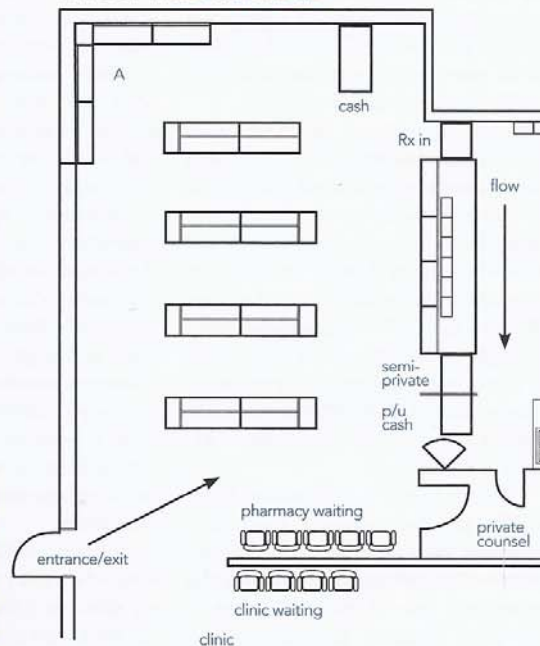
Now, people will argue that they were planning to install signs that clearly show patients where the cash is, and where to go to hand in their prescriptions—in this case, to the far end of the dispensary. Although this is a nice idea, human nature will lead many patients to simply propel themselves to the closest counter—especially if behind that counter is a smiling face.

This principle is not purely academic. Applied incorrectly, it negatively affects both workflow within the dispensary and sales in the front shop.



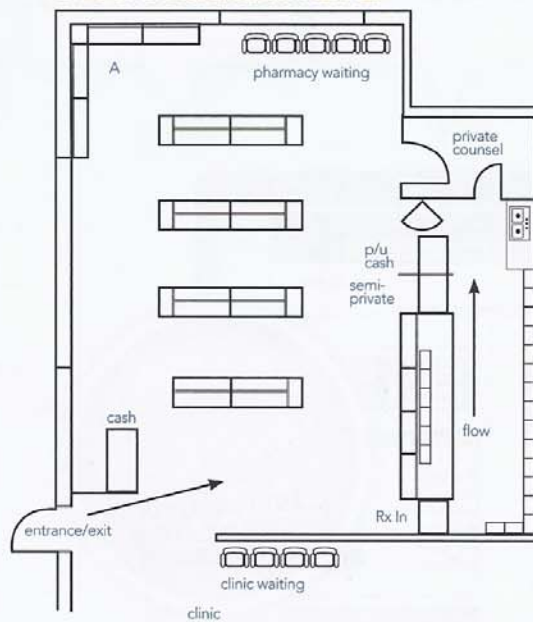
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LAYOUT 1: AS PROVIDED



Signage is meant to reinforce, not force, your patients to the right areas of the pharmacy.

LAYOUT 2: DISPENSARY FLIPPED



### WORKFLOW

When patients arrive first at the cash (instead of reception), your staff has one of two options:

Bad workflow option 1—ask the patient to walk to the other end of the dispensary counter to hand in their prescriptions. This will waste time and undoubtedly upset many patients who wonder why they have to do the extra “work.” It will be especially aggravating to them if they have waited in line at the cash before being told to move to the reception area.

Bad workflow option 2—take the prescription(s) at the cash counter and bring them to data entry. This will also waste time and disturb the pharmacy’s workflow.

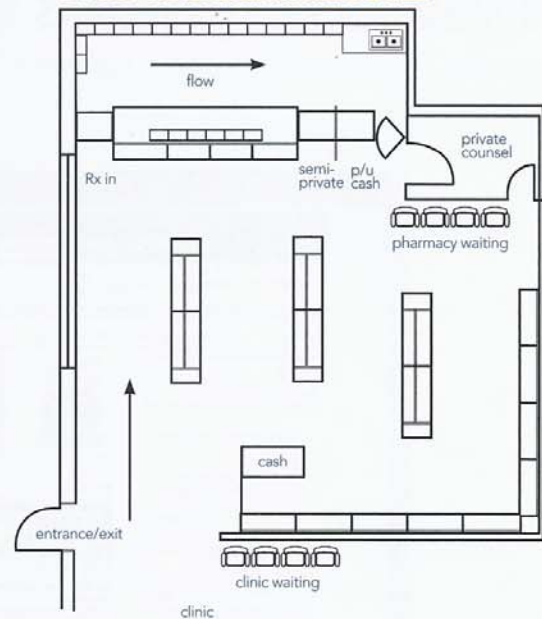
### SALES

Look at the area marked with an “A” in the “Layout 1.” If patients enter, present themselves at the cash, then sit in the waiting area (shown at the bottom of the drawing), who will ever shop in the top left corner of the store? Indeed, how many patients will shop much of the store at all?

The solution to these dilemmas is quite simple: Flip the dispensary, as shown in Layout 2.

All we’ve done here is make one change to the layout: We have flipped the entire dispensary (including the private counselling room) so that the reception is in a natural location—where patients enter the store. After they hand in their prescriptions, the flow leads patients to the top of the store. With this layout, on their way to and/or from the waiting area, people will be much more likely to shop.

LAYOUT 3: DISPENSARY RELOCATED



Note that there may be reasons why the client desires the dispensary on the right-hand wall. As this layout was submitted anonymously, we are not in a position to argue for or against this location. However, assuming the dispensary can be relocated to another wall, Layout 3 shows another approach to the space.

Once again, we have not made any changes to the size or internal layout of the dispensary as provided. We have simply relocated the dispensary to the rear wall. As you can see, with this flow, patients will be led naturally to the Rx-In/reception counter. From there, they can see the waiting area, which will take them around the pharmacy—thus encouraging shopping.

Another benefit of this layout is the increased use of wall shelving rather than islands. By reducing the number of islands from 4 to 3, we have increased the open spaces between bays, making the shopping environment more pleasant. As an added bonus, as wall shelving is taller than islands (84” versus 54”–66”) our total available shelf space increases by 37%. □

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Could YOUR pharmacy use a design makeover?  
Submit your drawings, layouts or photos to  
[vicki.wood@rci.rogers.com](mailto:vicki.wood@rci.rogers.com).