

**Case Study**

# Bartle’s Pharmacy Embraces Medication Adherence Solutions to Enhance Patient Relationships and Improve Compliance

**A small rural pharmacy adopts adherence technology and sees immediate impact to the bottom line.**

## Executive Summary

By integrating McKesson’s Adherence Performance Solution (APS) into their practice on a daily basis, Bartle’s Pharmacy in Oxford, NY immediately realized improvements to their bottom line including:

- More than a 10% increase in the average PDC in two adherence categories over six and twelve-month periods for the sample population.
- Prescription refills increased from 3.6 to 10 fills per patient across all three tracked categories.
- Generated additional tangible revenue from increased fills and intangible revenue in the form of DIR fee reduction.
- Realized better inventory management with ordering of high cost drugs on an as needed basis.
- Created an enhanced pharmacist-patient relationship by allowing the pharmacist to be more proactive in patient care.
- Achieved a Top 20 standing in the CMS Five-Star Quality Ratings within the first year.



## The Impact of Value-Based Care on Pharmacy

Since 1963, Bartle’s Pharmacy has been caring for the citizens of Oxford, New York and the surrounding areas. Heather Ferrarese, PharmD, a second-generation pharmacist, took over operations and quickly realized that the pharmacy world as her parents knew it had changed. “We view all of our patients and customers as extended family yet it’s becoming harder and harder for us to do so in today’s environment. With performance metrics impacting DIR fees and decreased reimbursement rates reducing profitability, we have to look for new revenue streams and provide enhanced services to remain a financially sound business to still be here for our patients.”

One such method is to maintain strong Five-Star Quality Ratings through a focus on payer performance criteria, which can reduce a pharmacy’s DIR account from 5% to 3%.

As a highly performing store, Ferrarese recalled that they were on track to receive a significant amount of reimbursement money, but if they missed the mark they would move to the next category of lower reimbursement. “Seeing that actual number on paper forced me to realize that if we don’t do all these necessary things right away, we will be leaving a lot of money on the table that we just can’t afford to walk away from.”

Knowing that medication adherence was a key component of the quality measures, Bartle’s focused on that to impact their Star Ratings and reimbursement rates. Understanding that early patient identification was critical, Bartle’s sought an adherence technology solution that would allow for successful, real-time interventions before non-adherence becomes a significant issue.

### Leverage Technology to Quickly Identify and Address Adherence

When searching for the right solution, one of their biggest requirements was real-time data. Ferrarese recalled that, “We needed a solution that would make information readily available so we could immediately take advantage of every patient engagement opportunity to improve adherence.”

The answer came in the form of McKesson’s Adherence Performance Solution (APS), which features an online dashboard providing valuable data to help pharmacies understand and act on medication adherence behaviors. APS, which can be fully integrated with McKesson Pharmacy Systems for maximum benefit, allows users to quickly review medication coverage gaps, record notes on patient interactions, view the patient’s trend over time and browse through individual medication fills for the patient. APS quickly and easily identifies non-adherent patients and the number of adherent patients needed to improve ratings, in a form that can be easily shared with payers, prescribers and even patients.

### Data-Driven Adherence Goals to Improve Performance

The first step in implementing APS into Bartle’s workflow was to establish goals and their primary one was to always be a Five-Star rated pharmacy. “Maintaining that Top 20% is critical,” said Ferrarese. “Today the threshold is 83%, but the metrics are only going to get harder and harder to achieve as pharmacies reach that number. When the next increase happens, I want to already be at the next level.”

After identifying the five categories they would focus on (statin use in diabetics; proportion of days covered for hypertension, cholesterol and diabetes; and higher risk meds), Bartle’s used APS to quickly identify the patients that were good candidates for medication synchronization based on compliance and disease state factors. As Ferrarese explained, “We targeted the layer below 80% compliant as

we figured those were the easiest folks to move. We first focused on our statin use in diabetes because it was not quite where it needed to be to get us in the Top 20%.”

**“As a business owner, I need to know that I am doing everything in my power to minimize DIR fees on my end. APS is keeping patients compliant, which helps our ratings and improves the bottom line, so we can continue to provide the high touch, quality patient care that our patients expect from us.”**

Heather Ferrarese, PharmD,  
Bartle’s Pharmacy

### Quality Reporting and Patient Engagement Improves Compliance

APS provided Bartle’s with a real-time master list of all target patients in five categories, which they used to define the top reasons for non-compliance and then craft a plan to improve adherence. After first determining if a patient was eligible for a refill, a pharmacy tech would make phone calls to prompt action. A letter was included in the prescription, triggering a special adherence consultation with the pharmacist when the patient came in to pick it up. “The accessibility to data is one of the best things about APS. It’s so easy for staff to keep their eyes out for patients on our target list, they don’t even have to log into the system and can initiate a conversation or consultation. As we fill prescriptions, we can quickly

check that patient’s compliance rates and identify candidates for our adherence program.” said Ferrarese.

With some patients, the APS profile would be shared with the patient to initiate a conversation about the importance of compliance. “We’re in the best position to remedy those situations. This lets us discuss compliance in a non-threatening manner, which makes the patient feel good that we are watching out for them. Then I can take that information and tackle adherence based on what I’ve learned.”

In addition, the quality of the reporting has drastically improved Bartle’s ability to improve processes that affect their entire patient population because APS allows users to filter by third-party, patient, location and ordering provider. “I am seeing our entire data set of patients in real-time instead of waiting 90 days to find out if we have a compliance issue,” she offered. “APS proactively shows me those patients that are affecting me or have the potential to affect me, so I can take action on them now before it influences our ratings and reimbursement rates.”

### Adherence Improvements Drive Pharmacy Revenue

Using APS, Bartle’s saw more than a 10% increase in the average PDC in two adherence categories over a six month period for the sample population. Using the same patient population over a twelve-month period, their average PDC went from just over 65% to 80% in all three categories. The adherence program also delivered in the form of fills, which increased across all three categories as well. For oral diabetes medication use, the numbers went from 3.6 to 10 fills per patient annually over a twelve-month period resulting in higher revenue. As Ferrarese states, “Statin use in diabetics has been kind of a thorn in our side and something that we have worked very hard to get going, so seeing fills of these medications increase was very satisfying.”

### Clinical Improvements Enhance Financial Performance

Because APS helps identify patients for enrollment in medication synchronization, the pharmacy has been able to reduce inventory. “Our bottom line has improved by increasing the number of refills and we have trimmed the expense of inventory because we don’t order the medication until the prescription is processed,” explained Ferrarese.

In the end, it all comes down to DIR fees and she is happy with the effect APS has had on them. “Our DIR fees have not increased, which is a good thing because I know that rates are going up.” Reimbursements are more difficult to gauge, especially since Bartle’s works with a lot of generics that are harder to monitor, but Ferrarese believes they are heading in the right direction. “There is the tangible revenue of fills and the intangible revenue that I’ve prevented from losing in the form of DIR fees. The steps I’m taking are not only helping me meet my metrics, but are making my pharmacy more appealing on paper to a payer so I can expect my DIR rates to go down.”

This is already proving to be true as she has used her APS performance data as a key element to gain membership in the Community Pharmacy Extended Service Network (CPESN), a high performing network that Bartle’s was recently invited to join.

### Maximize Patient-Pharmacy Interactions to Improve Care

Having so much information at their fingertips has really helped streamline Bartle’s operation, freeing up pharmacy staff to operate at the top of licensure. Ferrarese is pleased with the transformative changes APS has brought to their workflow, allowing them to be more proactive in patient care. “Before we were reactively filling prescriptions as fast as we could to get patients out the door, and now we are having meaningful conversations that we need to be having.”

Bartle’s Pharmacy has a long-standing slogan of being “your hometown pharmacy with world-class customer service,” and enhanced patient care is the heart and soul of their operation. “APS has enhanced the pharmacist-patient relationship by giving us our clinical responsibility back and allowing us to become pharmacists again,” stated Ferrarese. “When you present this type of information directly to the patient, they begin to think of you as a part of their care team rather than the person who gives them their pills every month. I think the reason we are attracting new business is because our patients know we are concerned about their health and well-being and they tell their friends that Bartle’s really takes care of them.”

### Looking Ahead to Further Advance Patient Compliance

Ferrarese continues to be a daily user of APS and is thrilled with how it has helped address their medication adherence. There is more work to be done and she already has plans for how this technology can continue to make a positive impact on her business. “We are always striving to do better and will continue working on that Top 20% cushion. Next year our two goals are to do more provider outreach and really focus on the negative impact that high-risk medications can have on patients. With MACRA going into effect, physicians are going to start worrying about their patient’s compliance issues. Using the reports APS offers, I’ll be able to show providers the percentage of their patients coming to my pharmacy and using my services that are compliant. I have the tools to impact their medication adherence and compliance rates, which is beneficial to everyone.”

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