Hadley

CVS Pharmacy: Spoken RX

Presented by Ricky Enger

Ricky Enger: Welcome to Hadley Presents. I'm your host, Ricky Enger, inviting you to sit back, relax, and enjoy a conversation with the experts. In this episode, we discuss the Spoken RX service from CVS Pharmacy, and our guest is Pharmacy Operations Manager, Lindsey Desrosiers. Welcome to the show, Lindsey.

Lindsey Desrosiers: Thank you, Ricky. So excited to be here.

Ricky Enger: Yes, it is fantastic to have you as well. I can't wait to dive into our discussion today. But before we do that, why don't we just get a little info about you. Tell us a bit about who you are and what you do at CVS.

Lindsey Desrosiers: Sure, gladly. I am a pharmacist by education and I work for CVS Pharmacy and particularly manage Spoken RX, which is an audible label feature available at our CVS Pharmacy locations. I manage the day-to-day operations for Spoken RX, which is very exciting work.

Ricky Enger: That's fantastic. I can tell you really love what you do with Spoken RX, and actually we love it too here at Hadley. In fact, we’ve created some workshops on how to go through the process of getting it set up and then, how to use Spoken Rx. And of course, those are going to be available for free on the Hadley website, and we’ll touch on that again a little later. You've kind of alluded to this a bit in your intro, so before we really dive into talking about all the cool things about Spoken RX, what exactly is it?

Lindsey Desrosiers: Yeah, of course. So Spoken RX is a breakthrough feature on our CVS pharmacy application and it reads prescription information aloud in English or Spanish. Spoken RX is an important aid for patients with complete blindness, significant visual impairment, literacy or language difficulties or dyslexia. It’s available at no cost to patients, so that’s very exciting that we have this in all our locations.

Ricky Enger: Yeah, for sure.

Lindsey Desrosiers: We worked very closely with the American Council of the Blind throughout the entire process. And they really provided some valuable input and feedback in both the development and testing of Spoken RX. So, of all the similar at home audible label readers that patients can use at home, this is really the first in-app prescription reader application to be developed by a national retail pharmacy. It's very unique because it directly connects to CVS's internal dispensing software in a way that can read the radio frequency stickers to help eliminate difficulties in differentiating and managing medication. Patients will know exactly what medication they're holding in their hand and how to take it.

With Spoken RX patients no longer need to have a separate device and can get their medication information anytime, anywhere with a couple taps on their smartphone and scanning their pill container. So, Spoken RX really does add to our existing braille, audio and large print accessible prescription label options that are already available through CVS.com. And it's one of the latest features integrated into our CVS Pharmacy mobile application, which makes it easy for patients to stay connected to health resources, refill their prescriptions, and make appointments for health services such as vaccinations and testing.

Ricky Enger: That's awesome. And I just have to say, I love that you all consulted with people who are blind or have low vision to really get the info you needed to make this as good a product as it can be because that's so important. Also, if you don't have a smartphone, and we'll get to this a bit later, but if you don't have a smartphone, don't tune out now because there are options for you as well. Before we get into that though, what was the reasoning behind CVS Pharmacy deciding to develop Spoken RX?

Lindsey Desrosiers: Yes, so at CVS Pharmacy we're always looking for new ways to innovate and really just serve our patients better. Recognizing that prescription management and medication adherence can be particularly difficult for patients with visual impairments or those who cannot read a standard print label because the font can be very small on those labels with all the information available. CVS pharmacy really listened to all of the feedback and decided to develop its own solution. There’re really no restrictions with Spoken RX. Anyone can get it and it allows for a greater level of privacy, safety, and independence for our blind and visually impaired patients.

Ricky Enger: That's great. So, you don't have to actually wait longer for your prescription just because it has to have a special label, that happens the same day, which is amazing. I guess it's worth asking the question where is it available? Is it just like a few cities and it's rolling out to other places over time or is it available everywhere?

Lindsey Desrosiers: We're available now in all our CVS Pharmacy locations nationwide. We have almost 10,000 stores and Spoken RX is available in all of the local retail locations.

Ricky Enger: That's got to be a relief, because I know that for a lot of people they are in areas where maybe there were previous pharmacy solutions, but it wasn't available in their area for whatever reason. I'm curious though, we've talked a lot about the availability on a smartphone, which is awesome, but for people who for whatever reason are just not smartphone people, either they really want the buttons or they're sticking with the landline for now, is there something available for them to read Spoken RX tags as well?

Lindsey Desrosiers: Yes. The great thing is that we do have multiple options for Spoken RX. If they do not have access to the application, they're able to request one free standalone speaker device from their local pharmacy team.

Ricky Enger: That's awesome. So we've talked about what Spoken RX is and maybe in theory how it might work, but why don't we dive a little deeper into that. How exactly does the technology work? You have all of this information that somehow makes it onto the printed label? I'm always amazed by just how much stuff fits there. How does that information then get transmitted to a person who's using Spoken RX?

Lindsey Desrosiers: The process is very simple. First, I'll just say the enrollment process is very simple. It's free for all patients and there's no restrictions as I mentioned before. Any patient can request Spoken RX audible labels. For the enrollment process, all patients need to do if they're going to use the digital application is download the CVS Pharmacy app from either the App store or Google Play, depending on which device they have and just register a CVS pharmacy digital account. When they go to their pharmacy, they can do this either in the store when they're going in for their prescriptions or over the phone, they can just connect with their local pharmacist or pharmacy team and request Spoken RX in their profile. So it's very simple to set this up. The pharmacy team will ensure that they have their indicator and their profile all set and then all their prescriptions going forward will have the audible labels affixed.

So, how it works is now our stores are equipped with the proper equipment and they have these stickers that will be affixed to the bottom of the patient's prescription bottle or outside of the container or package. This little tag, which is like a little white sticker, will then be scanned with the Spoken RX application to hear prescription information read out loud.

The patient will open the CVS Pharmacy app, and then we have Spoken RX available in the pharmacy section under pharmacy tools. All they need to do is hold their prescription bottle or package with that sticker affixed and hold it within four inches of their smartphone. When it's read correctly, the prescription information will be spoken out loud for the patient, which is great. If they want a standalone reader, they would just put their bottle or package right on the standalone reader and all their prescription information will be spoken out loud to them.

Ricky Enger: Great. And that's going to have all this information, right? It's not going to be just the name of the prescription, but you have no idea how often you're supposed to take it or if this one belongs to you or perhaps your caregiver or somebody. So yeah, what is the information that someone can get access to using that spoken RX label?

Lindsey Desrosiers: Yes, so it's actually really exciting. We've further enhanced this to include as much prescription information as we possibly can on those stickers. The information that's spoken aloud is in either English or Spanish, depending on the patient's preference. The information includes key pieces of information such as the patient's name, the medication name, the medication dosage and direction, and exactly how to take that medication. It includes things that are important for that patient to know, if they need to take it with food or taking it first thing in the morning. The really key pieces of information that's important for the patient.

And then other details, we have the prescription number on there, we have the dispense quantity and refills remaining, the prescriber name, the fill date, and the discard after date. And again, that's another important piece of information for patient safety is to know when that medication is really good until. Also, the pharmacy phone number, so the patient is able to connect with their pharmacy team directly. The great thing about using our CVS Pharmacy digital application is that there is a direct link to the pharmacy phone number so they can directly contact their pharmacy team if they have any additional questions. So that's exciting. That made it a lot easier for them to contact them.

The other cool thing about our digital application is there's an additional option at the bottom where patients can get more details about their prescription. Important details that a patient might want to know, such as if they want to know some common side effects of the medication, if there are some drug interactions, additional warning label information. Or it could just be they want to learn more about the medication and what it's used for. So, there's really a lot of information directly available for the patient at their fingertips.

Ricky Enger: That really is amazing. As I said before, I can't believe just how much info is somehow fitting onto that printed label. And as a blind person myself, I was just accustomed to having to memorize things or make notes for myself. And certainly the prescription number if I have to refill it, that's one of the first things they ask for when you call that automated thing, what's your prescription number? I don't know. And so having access to that is really very cool.

Lindsey Desrosiers: Yes. Yes, exactly. I can't agree more.

Ricky Enger: Departing from Spoken Rx for just half a second because as cool as this is, I know that for whatever reason, audible instructions are not preferred by everybody or not accessible for everybody. So you've kind of mentioned this before, but I guess Spoken RX is in addition to some other things that CVS Pharmacy offers for prescription labels. What else is available?

Lindsey Desrosiers: Yes, we do have some additional options. Scrip Talk, which I know a lot of patients are familiar with, uses a tabletop reader to play coded medication information on the label. And this is available through CVS.com. The interesting thing with Scrip Talk is this is something that was built from En-Vision America, and this is the same type of reader that we use for Spoken RX. So, we did partner with En-Vision America because we know that that is a very popular reader. We're trying to make it as best as we can for our patients.

The other thing that we have are braille labels. So there's an embossed label that contains the patient's name and the name of the medication that is also available through CVS.com. So we do have other options for this community, but we just wanted to have something that was available at all our direct stores for patients to make it a little bit easier for them to get something quickly.

Ricky Enger: Yeah, makes sense. So the part of this that I am just incredibly excited about is that CVS and Hadley have had the opportunity to partner together, even beyond the podcast that we're recording today. So how did all of that come about and why did CVS pharmacy choose to work with Hadley? And in what way is that partnership taking place?

Lindsey Desrosiers: CVS and Hadley really do share a commitment to empower the lives of those with vision loss or blindness, and really partner to further assist people with a digital solution within the pharmacy. We partnered to create workshops which will help demonstrate how to enroll in Spoken Rx to make it easier for patients to enroll and begin using Spoken RX.

These workshops will really show how to use the different applications, whether it be iOS or Android or our standalone reader, and help patients hear those critical prescription details spoken out loud. I really think these workshops will be extremely beneficial. It's going to be a great additional resource for patients to go to for any type of assistance with proper use of Spoken RX.

Ricky Enger: Absolutely. And we've had just a wonderful experience working with you and CVS as well. In our show notes we're going to have information about how to access Spoken RX information. We'll have links to the workshops on the Hadley site and links to the Spoken RX information on the CVS website. But if somebody would really just like to talk to a human and get the whole process started, maybe they're not even sure what their local CVS Pharmacy is, which one is closest or what have you, is there a number that people can call just to talk with people from CVS pharmacy who can walk them through this whole process of getting registered or figuring out what their pharmacy is or any of that stuff?

Lindsey Desrosiers: Yes. We do have a general phone number that patients can call for any questions, and that's 1-800-SHOP-CVS. This is a great resource for all patients. The other thing that we do have available is our CVS Spoken RX landing page, and that is found at CVS.com/spokenrx. We'll have some further details on our website. Patients are also able to identify a local store on our website, so there is a store locator available. But I do encourage patients to really speak to their local pharmacy team for assistance about getting set up with Spoken RX. The pharmacy teams are more than willing to help patients. And all our pharmacy colleagues have all the information they need to be able to help our patients.

Ricky Enger: That's fantastic. Well, Lindsey, thank you so much for spending a little time with us just talking about Spoken Rx and it's clear how excited you are and how invested you are in the service. I think it's going to be incredibly beneficial for people to be able to take their medications independently just through the access that Spoken RX is providing. So again, thank you so much for joining us today.

Lindsey Desrosiers: Oh, thank you so much for having me again. This has been a great partnership and I really cannot thank Hadley enough. So, thank you so much for having me on today, Ricky.

Ricky Enger: Got something to say. Share your thoughts about this episode of Hadley Presents or make suggestions for future episodes. We'd love to hear from you. Send us an email at podcast@hadley.edu, that's P-O-D-C-A-S-T @hadley.edu. Or leave us a message at 847-784-2870. Thanks for listening.