

The Pharmacy That Humbles Me

Category: At the Pharmacy

written by Kaitlyn Jacobs | May 27, 2024

The uneasiness of heading into the weekend without my medications lurks over me as I drift into the second hour of waiting on the online pharmacy phone queue. What was 3:30 pm. . . 4 pm ... 4:30 on a Friday is approaching 5 pm.

Ironically, the only thing distracting me from my stress is responding to my own patients' messages. (I'm a physician.) Here I wait, typing lab, X-ray, ultrasound results, note after note.

Phone vibrates.

At last! My turn! On answering, I am not greeted by a pharmacist or technician; just another automated answer. Sure, I'll continue to hold for the pharmacist. The waiting-room music sings through the receiver, accompanied by the rhythmic sound of my typing.

As I wait, mentally crossing my fingers that they'll pick up and not disconnect accidentally for the second time, another automated message states: "Hello! Your call is important to us. Please stay on the line..."

I'm sure everyone else is trying to refill their medications before the weekend, too. I bet there's only a few pharmacists working.

Another automated message lists options to help direct my call. Is my request considered a refill if my doctor sent a new script? If I select "check the status of my order," will I be able to return to this menu if I'm wrong? I just wish there was a technician to help me. I wish I could just see someone in person.

If I could afford this medication, I wouldn't even have to use this specific pharmacy. This week, I've already been through this phone ordeal with two other online pharmacies that couldn't fill my prescription. I remember when pharmacies were first marketed as a convenience. Is it so wrong to just want to speak with a person?

Click.

Silence.

Did I really just get disconnected for the third time?!

I'm exhausted. Exhausted from hours waiting on the phone, just trying to connect with a non-automatic bot. Exhausted from asking my kind physician to re-send to a new pharmacy every few months, as I seek whichever one can fill this non-formulary medication most cheaply. I miss the days when the words "non-formulary" or "alternative" didn't leave a knot in my stomach. I miss the days when my medications were covered at my local pharmacy. If something changed, I could consult that pharmacist. I'm exhausted from being on hold

for hours on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and again today, just for one medication.

Before I hang up, I hear the automated voice: "Hello, thank you for holding. Before we fill your prescription, we have to contact your doctor's office for some information. Press 1 to return to the main menu."

I was just at my doctor's office today. Well, *virtually* I was—in between seeing my own patients and catching up on their refill requests before the weekend. I wouldn't want them to miss their medications...

But now, *I* am the patient. And now, it's 5 pm on a Friday. I took my last pill yesterday. And I'll be missing my medication. Oh, how this pharmacy has humbled me.

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