

# Times & Transcript (Moncton)

## Pharmacies to upgrade technologies; n Electronic prescriptions could be coming to New Brunswick

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FREDERICTON - Carrying a handwritten slip from the doctor's office to the pharmacy may soon be a thing of the past, thanks to new technology being developed right here in New Brunswick.

MedRunner, a Saint John-based start-up company, is getting ready to release new software that will allow doctors to send prescriptions directly to pharmacies to be filled, increasing efficiency and quality of service in the process.

"The main thing that we provide is real-time communication between physicians and pharmacists," says Todd Murphy, CEO of MedRunner.

"We're connecting two completely different parties that, at this point, have no real-time communication."

Now concluding trials with a limited number of participants, the technology serves many purposes. For pharmacists, it takes the guesswork out of deciphering doctors' famously messy handwriting and saves them from having to make extra calls to confirm their instructions.

It also provides information regarding possible medication conflicts or reactions, increasing patient safety and service at the same time.

Ryan Kennedy, the owner and operator of a Saint John Pharmasave, says that will be especially helpful when patients visit different pharmacies.

"If you can see what people are getting at other pharmacies or from other physicians, you'll have the whole picture," he says.

"If somebody just simply drops in here to get a prescription filled because it's convenient, but their pharmacy is normally in Grand Manan, then you're not going to know (what else they're taking)."

Across the country, 450 million prescriptions are filled each year.

If making that process electronic saves time for everyone involved, it will help save time and money, Kennedy says, pointing out that it is already in wide use in the United States.

"What it all is about is trying to take advantage of the efficiencies of the technology that we already have in our stores," he says.

"If it's used properly, not only do you have efficiencies, there can be a lot of reduction in errors."

Starting in early November, the technology will go from testing to the open market, meaning it could be coming to pharmacy in southeastern New Brunswick sometime soon. Murphy says there are also regulatory challenges to making sure an electronic prescription meets the legal requirements in any given area.

"When you look at pharmacy and health care, a lot of these acts and provincial regulations date back to the early-80s, so a lot of these regulatory bodies are just starting to bring the documents up to date," he says.

Murphy says that including New Brunswick's doctors and pharmacists in the technology's development was key to its successful growth. A local group of about a dozen doctors has formed the core of the consultations, but more than 100 other doctors and pharmacists have also contributed.

"We've really focused on usability, functionality and building this with physicians, so that's the key," he says.

MedRunner was the recipient of a \$100,000 venture capital investment yesterday courtesy of the New Brunswick Innovation Foundation. The foundation is an independent corporation supporting the development of innovation in New Brunswick, with a mandate to strengthen make investments in applied research and businesses in high-growth sectors.

It has also received \$125,000 from the non-profit First Angel Network Association and \$75,000 from private investors.

In April, the company was nominated for a KIRA (Knowledge Industry Recognition and Achievement) award for the province's most promising start-up.

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