



Elephant Pharmacy

A pharmacy that not only caters to disease states but also promotes health and wellness—that is the idea behind Elephant Pharmacy,” staff pharmacist Anne Wardell, PharmD, recently explained to *Pharmacy Today*. Founded in December 2001 by Stuart Skorman, with its first store opening on November 25, 2002, in Berkeley, Calif., Elephant Pharmacy has become a popular place among patients

who are interested in herbal remedies, as well as those who take prescriptions and commonly used OTCs. In fact, Elephant Pharmacy is so popular that a second store opened in San Rafael, Calif., in December 2005.

According to Wardell, Skorman is a self-proclaimed “serial entrepreneur,” and the concept for Elephant Pharmacy grew out of several of his brainstormed ideas. Elephant aims to promote a healthy

lifestyle and offers a place where patients can find products that help them become healthier and remain that way. Skorman also wanted the pharmacy to be recognized as a place where people can be cared for, where the staff is knowledgeable, and where the environment is unique and fun—hence the name “elephant.”

Elephant covers all bases

Elephant Pharmacy’s physical design



caters to all

California firm offers Eastern therapies, Western medications

is modeled on “big box” stores. Wardell explained that the layout is large so it can accommodate many product choices for patients. The store carries “Eastern” and “Western” types of medications and provides a wide variety of products found in a large chain drug store as well as an abundant supply of alternative remedies. Its conventional Western products include prescription medications and commonly used OTCs. Eastern products include

natural body care and cosmetic items, natural foods and wine, high-quality vitamins and supplements, yoga and Pilates gear, and scores of other products that can complement a healthy lifestyle. Elephant Pharmacy also stocks goods that are fair-trade-certified, meaning they are produced by workers who are treated humanely and compensated properly for their work.

In the center of the store, patients can

browse through books and magazines on health topics as well as information cards created by Elephant’s own editors. In this library atmosphere, patients can research alternative medicine and OTC options.

Patient interaction a priority

A graduate of Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, with more than 25 years of experience in hospital pharmacy,



Anne Wardell, PharmD

Hometown: Grew up on a farm near Blair, Nebraska

Family: Her partner is David Lingenfelter, PhD, who is employed by a stem cell research biotechnology firm. She has two stepchildren: Michael, graduated from Tufts University 2006 and employed at Corporate Executive Board in Washington, D.C.; and Alaina, a freshman at UCLA.

What brought her into pharmacy: She became a pharmacist and has specific interest in her current job because her mother died from breast cancer when she was 11. She remembers her mother experimenting with different types of cancer treatment—Eastern and Western—as well as following a diet of organic foods.

What makes her tick: Humor—one of her life's mottos is "Laughter really is the best medicine. Failing that, try chocolate" (fair-trade, organic, 65%–70% special dark chocolate, to be exact). Her license plate reads RXCHCLT.

One thing you'd be surprised to know about her: A few years ago she participated in a research expedition to the Indonesian island of Flores. She assisted with an ethnobotanical study in remote villages where some of the residents had never met Westerners before. The villagers' hospitality and generosity were outstanding; in addition, Wardell saw Komodo dragons in the wild—"amazing"!

Wardell enjoys her current work environment and would recommend her job to other pharmacists. "Here at the store, I am the full-time pharmacist along with four part-time pharmacists, one intern, and a full-time technician. Scheduling is tricky but we make it work." Employed at the San Rafael store—located across the bay in Marin County—since its opening, Wardell said that she especially enjoys working at Elephant because it gives her a lot of interaction with patients, something that she did not always get in her previous hospital pharmacy position.

What patients look for

At Elephant Pharmacy, every patient who receives a new medication is counseled; there is a small counseling room where patient and pharmacist can meet in private. Wardell said, "The prescription pharmacy is set up so we are read-

do with herbal and only want Western medicine. But usually it's a combination of both."

Wardell explained that both Eastern and Western approaches are used to treat disease states as well as allergy, cold, and sinus problems. She said that many patients come looking for herbal remedies for sleeplessness rather than seeking a prescription drug, and many have questions about medications prescribed for digestion, arthritis, menopause, and pain.

Besides the wide variety of products offered at Elephant Pharmacy, patients can participate in free events and classes at both the Berkeley and San Rafael locations. Local practitioners address a wide variety of topics that focus on health and wellness, including "Mind-Body: Chiropractic & Spirituality," and "Holistic Healing: Naturopathic Medicine for Headache

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ily available."

In the Eastern therapies portion of the store, homeopaths, herbalists, nutritionists, and aestheticians are available to counsel patients. Patients can speak with any of these practitioners for up to 15 minutes free of charge.

There are four demographic groups that Wardell counsels most often at Elephant Pharmacy: young mothers who are concerned about what their children are ingesting and are interested in organic and natural products; baby boomers, many of whom are experiencing their first chronic health issues; elderly patients seeking help in coping with chronic diseases; and patients from other countries who are familiar with Eastern medicine and are looking for a specific product.

Elephant pharmacists can check a database and counsel patients with questions about possible drug and herb interactions. Wardell explained, "We will find people who will come in and they only want herbal. They don't want anything to do with Western medicine. Then you find some people who don't want anything to

& Migraine Relief." Information about all events can be viewed on the Elephant Pharmacy Web site at www.elephant-pharmacy.com. Customers are surveyed at the end of events so that practitioners know if they are meeting patients' needs.

More Elephants on the way

With such a demand for its products, Wardell said that Elephant Pharmacy plans to open a store in Los Altos later this year and one in Walnut Creek in 2007. She thinks this type of store would be successful in other parts of the country because nonlocal patients often ask if Elephant plans to open branches on the East Coast or in the Midwest.

Wardell believes that Elephant Pharmacy has become successful because of the abundant medication options it offers its patients. She stated that countless people are taking the initiative to decide what type of medications they prefer. Elephant gives these patients the knowledge and education to make their decisions. Whether through herbal, OTC, or prescription medications, Elephant Pharmacy encourages a healthy lifestyle for all.

—Kristin A. Hodges