



## Hospital purchases medication “vending” machine

**(May 2005)** Healthcare is all about quality. When you're sick or injured you want the best. Not only does Lincoln Hospital have the best pharmacist around, but she has the best equipment to ensure patient safety, says Vice President of Clinical Services Marilynn Snider.

The PYXIS system, a pharmaceutical “vending machine” has changed the way Lincoln Hospital distributes medications to our patients. Not only does it keep a very accurate inventory, but it has cut down on prescription errors.

“The bottom line is this — everybody has medication errors,” says Marilynn. “If they don't, they're not reporting them.”

From June through December of 2004, Lincoln Hospital staff gave 45,521 doses of meds with an error rate of less than 1%. “In the industry, one percent is considered a good rate. Although Lincoln Hospital's error rate was already less than one percent, the PYXIS system has dropped that rate to .0013 since installing it in June,” says Marilynn. “It's reducing the few that we had.”

PYXIS not only increases patient safety, but it gives Pharmacist Merilla Hopkins a backup. As it is computerized and connected to Inland Northwest Health Services (INHS), when Merilla is gone, staff can still have prescriptions checked by a pharmacist in Spokane before distributing.

As rural hospitals cannot afford to have a pharmacist in-house at all hours 365 days per year, this equipment will cover the hours Merilla is not here and free her up to spend more time on clinical consults, education and program development. PYXIS, which is hooked up to Meditech, can scan in physician medication orders and send them to a live pharmacist at Sacred Heart Medical Center. The pharmacist will check the order for drug interactions etc., input the order into Meditech, then Meditech will interface with PYXIS and the patients meds will then be accessible to the nursing staff here through the vending machine. Overrides can be used in situations when meds are needed quickly.

“It's going to be a good thing for me as it will take away a lot of daily medication dispensing time, and it will free up the nurses who will do narcotic counts twice a week instead of twice each day,” Merilla says, noting the machine also keeps a perpetual inventory, which means a lot less pill counting. “I like that.”

Speaking of efficiency, the PYXIS equipment automatically bills the medications it dispenses — another big plus.

A \$170,000 piece of technology, PYXIS is something Lincoln Hospital could never afford on its own. “We have Marilynn Snider to thank for PYXIS,” says Merilla. “She was instrumental in getting this fully funded by a grant through INHS. It's a great tool that will continue to increase our quality of care.”