

## A path to Sheridan VA

In the fall of 1994, I read an article in a local paper announcing the transition of the bachelor's pharmacy program to a professional doctoral program at the University of Wyoming. I had been pursuing psychology, but reading about this new opportunity proved to be a pivotal moment for me — the next fall I returned to the university and changed my major to pre-pharmacy.

Seven long years and two sons later, I graduated with a doctorate in pharmacy and went on to complete a pharmacy residency in Columbus, Georgia. That year of additional, hands-on training gave me the extra skills I needed to do the work I do today — I learned how to be a pharmacist provider.

Typically, most people encounter their pharmacist as a retail pharmacist in a white coat, behind the counter at the drug store, filling prescriptions. But we can also be pharmacist "providers." This means we can do the same things as physicians after a veteran is diagnosed.

For example, we can prescribe medications under our name and care for veterans with diseases like diabetes, high blood pressure, pain and even depression.

The residency in Georgia allowed me to gain the hands-on skills to perform this work, and I applied them at a job in Colorado until 2009, when I returned home to Sheridan and started at the VA.

Today, I'm a pharmacist provider in the Sheridan VA's Acute Psychiatric Unit. I work with a team that includes a psychiatrist, a nurse practitioner, a nurse, a social worker and a psychologist. I monitor drug levels and help make changes in medications for our veterans to keep them safe and healthier.

Additionally, I am one of two specially-trained antimicrobial stewardship pharmacists. The stewardship team ensures the best use of antibiotics for veterans in Sheridan and those who visit VA clinics across Wyoming.

It's becoming more common to have a pharmacist provider on treatment teams, and some states allow pharmacists to work independently, much like a nurse practitioner.

Our pharmacists in the Sheridan VA Health Care System ensure veterans get the best care by working with other medical professionals — sharing information, seeing veterans individually to optimize medication regimens and providing specialized counsel to the veteran in order to promote safe and effective medication use.

For me, being a provider at the VA is one of the most satisfying jobs I can imagine. I'm often pushed outside my comfort zone and challenged to learn something new, whether it be medication-related or something deeper ... possibly a new insight into human behavior.

The messages in this short piece are twofold.

First, a pharmacist provider might be part of your health care team, so ask to see them when you engage the health care system.

Second, a note of gratitude: living and working in this community was something I never imagined more than 20 years ago when I read that article in the paper.

It is my privilege to serve our community, and I'm genuinely grateful to have the opportunity.

**DR. CEDAR KOETTING**, PharmD, is a pharmacist with the Sheridan Veterans Affairs Health Care System.

## CVS Health eyes kidney patients for next expansion into care

WOONSOCKET, R.I. (AP) — CVS Health is now planning to treat kidney failure patients, as the national drug-store chain continues to branch deeper into monitoring and providing care.

The company said Wednesday it will offer home dialysis for patients through its Coram business, and it is working with another unspecified company to develop a new device for that. A CVS spokeswoman declined to name the company or disclose how much CVS is spending on the venture.

The companies will start a clinical trial of their device this year.

CVS Health will begin its expansion into kidney care with a program that

helps identify chronic kidney disease early. It will then connect those patients with nurses for training and nutritional counseling to help delay the need for dialysis, a process that filters and cleans blood.

Coram specializes in care delivered at a patient's home and infusion therapy, which involves medication delivered through a needle or catheter.

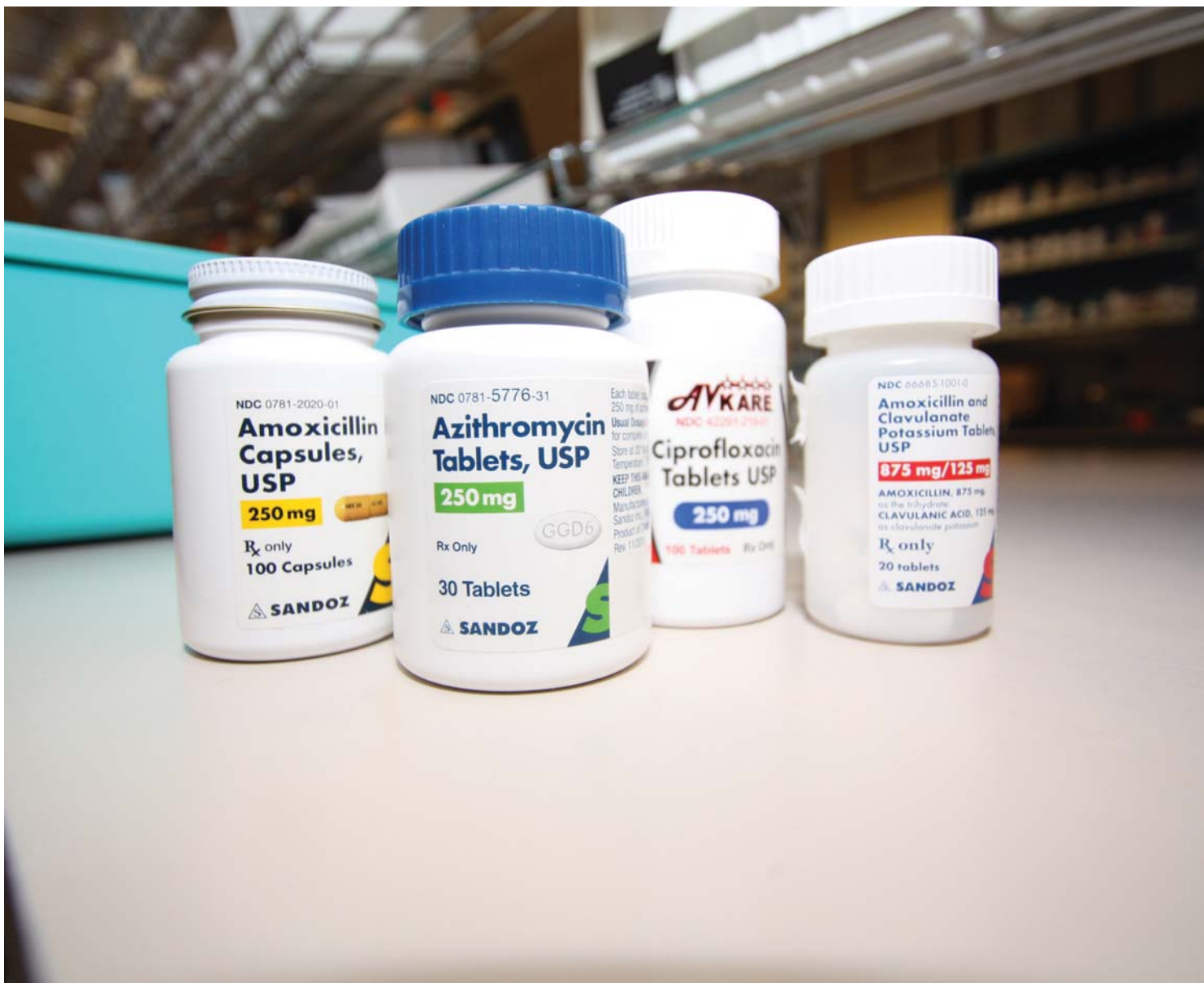
Woonsocket, Rhode Island-based CVS Health Corp. has been broadening its reach beyond drugstores for years. It also runs a pharmacy benefit management business and is spending \$69 billion to buy the insurer Aetna. It also has been expanding care offered

through its more than 9,800 locations.

CVS Health operates 1,100 clinics in its stores. It does blood draws for diabetes patients and helps monitor chronic conditions like high blood pressure at certain stores. The company also has started testing vision and hearing aid centers and is talking about selling more medical equipment or offering nutritionists to counsel customers.

Company leaders have said they aren't planning to replace doctors. Instead, they want to use their national reach to supplement the care patients already receive from a physician.

## JUST SAY NO



COURTESY PHOTO | OFFICIAL VETERANS AFFAIRS PHOTO BY KRISTINA MILLER/RELEASED

Doctors express caution when prescribing antibiotics for symptoms like cough and sore throat.

## Symptoms of infection don't mean you need an antibiotic

BY DR. CEDAR KOETTING  
SHERIDAN VETERANS AFFAIRS  
HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

SHERIDAN — Having just passed through a particularly severe flu season, questions regarding what treatments are the best might still be on everyone's mind. Symptoms of cough, runny nose, sore throat and congestion might lead you to believe that taking an antibiotic (amoxicillin, most commonly) is the quickest way to get healthy. You are right if what you have is caused by bacteria. However, most of the time these symptoms are caused by a virus.

Melanie Kawulok, a local nurse practitioner working for the Sheridan Veterans Affairs Health Care System, often sees people coming to seek care for their coughing and sneezing.

"I counsel my patients to utilize over-the-counter

treatments such as guaifenesin or a decongestant," she said. "I remind them that if an antibiotic isn't needed, it's more harmful than good to prescribe it. Antibiotics have side effects, and if you don't need them, it's better to not use them."

Prescribing an antibiotic when it's not needed can not only cause upsetting side effects, but also promote resistant bacteria — an ever-growing issue in America and across the world. Resistant bacteria are thought to be responsible for 2 million illnesses and more than 23,000 deaths each year in the United States.

### Antibiotic resistance

When bacteria repeatedly meet the same medications, they develop ways to promote their survival, which means these medications are no longer effective in

killing them. Studies show that overuse of antibiotics in a population leads to higher numbers of resistant bacteria. These resistant bacteria, which used to be easily treated, are passed from person to person and pose a threat to family members, schoolmates, coworkers and the community. Smart use of antibiotics is key to controlling the spread of resistance.

### What you can do to prevent antibiotic resistance

To prevent infection in the first place, get enough rest, follow a balanced diet and wash your hands often. Make sure to keep up with recommended vaccines as indicated — this is one of the best ways to prevent becoming ill with a virus. If you become sick with symptoms of a cold or the flu and

see a health care professional, let them know you are concerned about antibiotic resistance. Ask what you can do to feel better without the use of antibiotics.

If you receive a prescription for an antibiotic, take it exactly as prescribed and until all the medication is gone.

Don't keep any for the next time you get sick or share your medication with someone else. If you have any leftover medication from previous infections, get rid of it.

You can take leftover medication to a Prescription Drug Take Back Day or dispose of it in a sealed plastic bag filled with water and kitty litter or coffee grounds.

Lastly, don't pressure your health care professional to prescribe an antibiotic. Help to preserve a precious resource — antibiotics that work.

### SENIOR HAPPENINGS

- Antique Roadshow at The Hub set for Tuesday with check-in at 1 p.m. Ken and Sue Heuermann, Alex Banks, Wayne Sullenger and Darla Judes will combine knowledge to give their best estimate as to the value of your precious items. The Hub is located at 211 Smith St.
- The next round of Conversations In History will take place Wednesday

at 10:30 a.m. The topic will be the Samuel Hardin Ranch and the Old Stone House. The event will take place at The Hub on Smith.

- Come hear the Big Horn Alp Horns featuring Dale Hoffmann, Ryan Schasteen, Patricia Dray and Edre Maier and "Le Quattro Parte Recorders" featuring Patricia Dray, Edre Maier, Michele Folster and Ariel

Downing. The performance will take place Thursday at 6:30 p.m. at The Hub on Smith.

- National Volunteer Week is April 16-20. Terri Hayden, director of volunteer services at The Hub on Smith, would like to take a moment each day during the nonprofit's lunch to express gratitude. Stop by to take part.



### ENTRÉE CHOICE\* or SOUP/SALAD

Tue- Beef Taco Salad  
Wed- Sweet N' Sour Chicken  
Thu- Ham Penne Salad  
Fri- Oven Fried Chicken  
Sat- Meatloaf  
Sun- Pork Roast/Gravy  
Mon- Baked Salmon

### UPCOMING SPECIAL EVENTS

Tue- Antiques Road Show	1:00 p.m.	Community Room
Wed- Conversations in History	10:30 a.m.	Community Room
Thurs -Big Horn Alp Horns	6:30 p.m.	Café
Fri - BINGO	Noon	Café
Sat- Greeting Card Workshop	12:30 to 3:30 p.m.	Art Studio
Mon- National Volunteer Week	Lunch Time Accolades Daily	Café

FUN AND FOOD  
BUILD YOUR OWN SALAD  
Mondays - Fridays  
Entrees and kiosk include sides,  
dessert and drink.

Salad Bar Available  
Mondays - Fridays  
  
No Salad Bar on  
Saturday or Sunday

\*entrée only offered for Home Delivered Meals

Lunch Service Hours: 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., 365 days a year at 211 Smith Street  
Home Delivered Meals (307) 672-6079

Loan Closet, Outreach, and Administration Services, 672-2240. Mondays - Fridays.

Help at Home Services, 675-1978. 232 North Brooks: Mondays - Fridays.

Day Break Adult Care Services, 674-4968. 241 Smith Street: Mondays - Fridays.