



Integrated Pharmacy Program

Ray Gaucher, Andrea Manson,
and Doug Danforth

Ostomy Care and Supply Centre, West End Medicine
Centre Pharmacy, New Westminster, BC



Ostomy care a perfect fit for pharmacy

It began with a bookshelf in 1985. It continues today with thousands of square feet (with five examination rooms) five registered nurses, and 3,000 customers who steadily stream through the door.

When **Ray Gaucher**, owner of West End Medicine Centre in New Westminster, BC, replaced his pharmacy's magazines and books with ostomy supplies almost 30 years ago, he knew the market had potential. Not one to try things in half measures, he invested \$150,000 to build an examination room/bathroom and hire the services of Helen Manson, a registered nurse and enterostomal therapist (ET). It was not long before he had 200 regular clients, and growth has been steady ever since.

Inventory and service are the two pillars of the Ostomy Care and Supply Centre's success. Customers can walk in without an appointment and talk to a nurse in an examination room within an hour, then walk out with any needed products in hand (rather than having to wait weeks). At any given time, Gaucher carries at least \$100,000 in inventory, at cost. Clients can also order products, which are delivered free, and other pharmacies across Canada source products through the centre. "They have absolutely everything here," says one patient in a video clip.

Most important, clients describe the relaxed, family atmosphere throughout the store, which can be a balm for those who've had an ostomy. "It took me a while to get over it mentally," says the patient. "Here you just feel so welcome. I enjoy coming here, I really do."

The centre expanded to include four more examination rooms and additional inventory space in 2010, when Gaucher



and **Doug Danforth**, the pharmacy's co-owner, purchased a former dental practice next door. In addition to the five full- and part-time nurses—including lead nurse **Andrea Manson**, Helen's daughter—three full-time assistants run the department, which has its own operating manual.

The Centre hosts two educational events a year, attended by hundreds of ostomy clients and family members. There is no cost to attend these events, just as there are no fees for the services back at the centre. Revenue from product sales, as well as new business in the rest of the pharmacy, are sufficient to ensure profitability.

While difficult to quantify, the team also takes pride in the fact that they're saving costs in the public healthcare sys-

tem. The nurses regularly identify infections, intestinal blockages, blood clots, and other medical issues at the early stages, before they require emergency hospital care. Fitting adjustments also prevent wastage of valuable supplies.

Last but not least, Gaucher has helped other pharmacy owners set up their own ostomy businesses. An aging population, higher surgical success rates, and the shift to outpatient follow-up care make this a market that still has plenty of room for growth.

Says one of the Commitment to Care judges, "This is an excellent initiative on collaborating with nurses to create this amazing niche for your pharmacy. You are an inspiration to all pharmacy owners."

—Karen Welds

PHOTO: BEN NEWS