
Description: Ageing population, presence of large hospital chains as well as pharmacy chains and purchase power for healthcare technology helped North America to be early adopters and innovators of technology. Identification of new diseases and conditions, innovation and introduction of large number of drugs each year has made it difficult for pharmacists to keep track manually thus inclining them towards automation with the help of software systems and well as hardware components. The number of pharmaceuticals is increasing day-by-day along with the number of patients walking into a pharmacy. Pharmacists began committing errors in more pronounced numbers since it is becoming difficult to track patients and hundreds of different medications. Hence an automated system that can read prescription and point pharmacists on where to get it or robots that can fetch the drugs by themselves is being greatly appreciated. As chronic and acute diseases continue to increase, automation is expected to be in great demand to address rising number of patients. This will also address the demand for proper documentation of pharmaceuticals till the patient.

The market conventionally has been led by the western countries due to the presence of large number of companies operating within the region. The markets for Asia-Pacific, Latin America and Africa will prove to be a challenge for adoption of the technology primarily due to lack of purchase power. In addition, the lack of suitable reimbursement system, healthcare framework may lead to feeble results. Pharmacies in United States have commonly registered several issues with automation such as wrong drug and wrong dose errors and errors due to look-alike packaging. In emerging economies where there is a large presence of local manufacturers that have derived packaging styles from renowned brands overseas, these problems may be amplified multi-fold.

Crude estimates suggest the presence of over 5 million pharmacies across the world rising each year. However, healthcare facilities such as hospitals and nursing homes remained the largest buyers of pharmacy automation systems and are able to sustain the costs of installation due to greater amount of investment and purchase power as compared to independent pharmacies or chains. With the rising number of home care and nursing facilities, several pharmacy chains and large independent pharmacies are acquiring compounding robots to provide IV preparations and reconstituted injections for treatment. North America has over 75,000 pharmacies and more than 8,000 hospitals based on internal estimates and continue to show great promise for the adoption of pharmacy automation as more independent pharmacies install dispensing systems. The lack of wireless networking facilities and indeed the lack of internet altogether in most parts of emerging regions is a major challenge to the penetration of the technology. Hospitals also continue to run on meager funds that barely last for maintenance and purchase of crucial equipment. Most hospitals refer patients to purchase medication from independent pharmacies that are located near hospitals rather than maintaining a central pharmacy.

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