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## Tillamook Pharmacy closes after 22 years in business

By Chelsea Yarnell Guest Contributor

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Tillamook Pharmacy's last day in operation was Sept. 6. Customers' prescriptions were automatically transferred to Fred Meyer Pharmacy.

Photo by Chelsea Yarnell

On September 6, Tillamook Pharmacy shut their doors for good.

"This was a difficult and truly heartbreaking decision to make," owner Trushar Patel said. "Due to economics of the pharmacy industry, pharmacy closures have been happening at an alarming rate in recent years. The lack of reimbursement, negative margin claims, increasing fees by the Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBMs), rising drug cost, and insurance contracting has made it difficult to survive as a business."

Patel detailed that this closure is not unique to just Tillamook—pharmacies across the nation are shuttering.

“The trend of the overall industry is going in the wrong direction,” Patel said. “Due to a lack of regulation, the PBMs have turned this industry upside down.”

Pharmacy benefit managers are companies that serve as intermediaries between insurance companies and pharmacies, negotiating discounts for their customers while putting pressure on pharmacies to lower their prices.

And it’s not just independent, small pharmacies that are struggling.

“The chains are going through a difficult time as well,” Patel said. “For example, Bi-Mart closed down all 56 of their pharmacy locations last year due to these factors. Even the larger chains, such as Walgreens, will be closing 150 locations by the end of their next fiscal year. CVS is closing 900 pharmacies in the span of three years.”

Tillamook Pharmacy customers received a letter in the mail with information about the closure. It detailed that beginning September 7 all prescription records will automatically be available at Fred Meyer Pharmacy in Tillamook.

“We know that the impact of this closure will affect the lives of many and we hope that our patients are able to have a seamless transition to Fred Meyer,” Patel said.

At the time of the closure, Tillamook Pharmacy was serving roughly five-ten thousand customers a month.

“We care for you and about you and we will miss being your local, independent pharmacy,” Patel said. “Thank you for your love and support for all these years.”