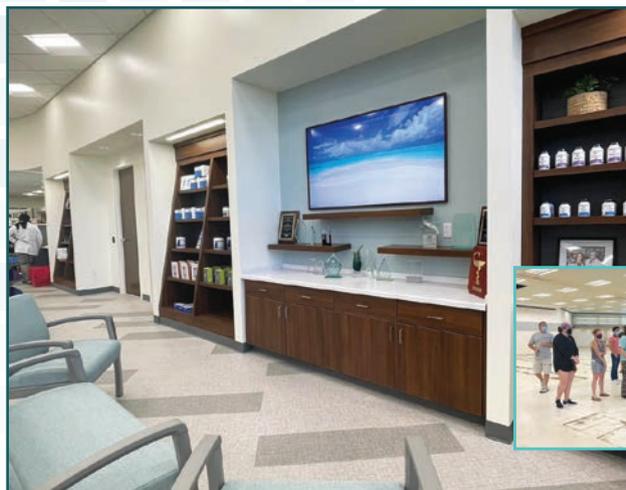


Welcome to wellness



Avant Pharmacy and Wellness Center expands for even more exceptional service

by Chris Linville

When Amina Abubakar opened Rx Clinic and Wellness in 2009, it provided services for specific types of patients, mostly underserved and primarily on Medicaid. In the ensuing years, Rx Clinic became more innovative, offering services that were increasingly cutting edge and futuristic, such as genetic testing and screenings for various disease states.

Eventually it became apparent that the pharmacy needed more space to continue expanding into even more clinical offerings.

“We thought that where we were, we couldn’t target those areas,” Amina says. “There was a need to be there for more than one population. We weren’t saying we were going to stop taking care of the underserved population anymore, but we wanted to have a place where everyone found what they were looking for. To do so we needed to move. We didn’t want to move too far

away from the area, but we were growing, we needed space for a compounding lab, and we do a lot of clinical services, and there was no more room.”

When looking for new locations, Amina says she caught a break. There was a Rite-Aid that had closed. The lease would be too expensive for the pharmacy to handle on its own, but she knew if she bought it, she could subdivide it. Amina says she has good relationships with different physician providers, so she talked to several and found some who were interested and agreed to open a medical clinic in one half of the building. The purchase was completed in the summer of 2020. Amina and her team worked with a contractor to design the space just as she wanted it. The interior was completely gutted, and renovations began in early 2021.

The new space, now known as Avant Pharmacy and Wellness Center, opened in August 2021. The building is 11,500 square feet, divided between the pharmacy and medical offices. The project was recognized as a 2022 NICE Award winner for Best Internal Modification. (See the March 2022 *America’s Pharmacist*® at www.ncpa.co/issues/APMARCH22_NiceAwards.pdf for complete coverage of all the NICE Award winners.)

“We wanted a space where when you first walked in it was welcoming, and not too sterile,” Amina says. “We want it to be comfortable for everyone who came in, whether it was buying vitamins or whatever else they needed.”

“We kept saying we were a hidden gem in Charlotte, and we just needed a physical location that matched our vision and ideas and all of our services.”



As part of the design, when patients enter the pharmacy, they are greeted by a care concierge who can help patients in finding what they are seeking.

“Another goal is to educate patients about what we have,” Amina says. “We want to show that it’s more than simply a pharmacy dispensing medications.”

Amina says the renovations in the new location gave the pharmacy the ability to integrate new services such as monoclonal antibody therapy treatment, along with increasing the number of COVID-19 vaccination services the staff was able to provide, also generating significant revenue for the pharmacy.

“We are blessed to have not only a brand-new building but also a completely redesigned blueprint that features not only a front end that has increased 2-1/2 times, but also a variety of service rooms that afford our clinical pharmacists the opportunity to practice at the top of their license,” Amina says.

Amina says that OTC sales have improved significantly. Its wellness programs have seen substantial activity with both its IV hydration room and wellness room generating a healthy cash flow since August.

Along with increasing the availability of Avant Pharmacy and Wellness Center’s services and offerings, Amina

says her vision has always been one of being an integral part of our local community. Not long after opening, the pharmacy held a local wellness event in the new location called “Be Well & Exhale!”

“This event featured all of our offerings and our audience was local collaborators and partners in the community,” Amina says, “As a result of this event alone, we were able to generate \$1,200 in sales from this two-hour pop-up event. None of this would have been possible without the transformation and rebrand that our company underwent.” The pharmacy also has its own parking lot, which makes a big difference in holding outdoor events. Previously Amina says the pharmacy would have to get permission from the landlord to do so.

Being a focal point in the community had always been Amina’s goal.

“Customers are happy, and new customers are choosing us over Walgreens across the street. We kept saying we were a hidden gem in Charlotte, and we just needed a physical location that matched our vision and ideas and all of our services,” she says. “We look forward to what our pharmacy can bring to the Charlotte community in the near future as we look to be a focal point for our patients and their health and wellness. Everything we ever envisioned, it’s now a reality.” ■

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