

'Pharmageddon': Hundreds of pharmacists organize walkouts at major chains calling for workload changes

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Pharmacists protest unbearable workloads

Jordan Bowen reports.

TAMPA, Fla. - It's a movement being dubbed "Pharmageddon" and involves pharmacists at big chains like CVS and Walgreens. They say they're upset and overworked pharmacists walking out of the job in protest of what they call unbearable workloads that could impact [patient safety](#).

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Filling prescriptions can sometimes take time – maybe days and sometimes just an hour. Now, it could take a lot longer depending on if your local pharmacists feel like a lot of others are overworked and understaffed.

"What we have going on here, I believe, is a crisis not only in pharmacy but pretty much across the healthcare system," said Michael Jackson, the Florida Pharmacy Association's interim executive vice president and CEO.

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As Jackson explained, any time pharmacists provide prescription services to a patient it's typically covered by an insurance plan, which reimburses the pharmacy.

"The reimbursements are not going up," Jackson said. "They're going down, and it's creating a situation where there is tremendous pressure on pharmacies to continue to provide these services but at lower costs."

It means there's less money to go around to pay for additional staff. Jackson said that has translated into heavier work loads for pharmacists, increasing the chances of mistakes when filling prescriptions.

The concerns have led hundreds of pharmacists across the country to organize walkouts at major chains like Walgreens and CVS on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of this week.

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"Patient safety is the utmost thing that's most important to these frontline pharmacists," Jackson said. "They're not saying we need more dollars. They're saying we need more support, more help to do the things that we're being asked to do. And I think that's not an unfair ask."

Walgreens have since responded to the reports of walkouts.

"We recognize the incredible work our pharmacists and technicians do every day and have taken a number of steps in our pharmacies to ensure that our teams can concentrate on providing optimal patient care," a Walgreens spokesperson wrote in a statement.

CVS also responded to the reports.

"We're making targeted investments to address their key concerns, including enabling teams to schedule additional support as needed, enhancing pharmacist and technician recruitment and hiring, and strengthening pharmacy technician training," a spokesperson for CVS wrote in a statement.

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