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## HEALTH & MEDICINE



**HEALTH TREND REPORT:**

### Customized Medicine

**By: Bill Beckman, RPh**

We all dream of having our own custom tailored clothes, a personal trainer to customize our fitness routine, or a custom built house that takes all our needs into consideration. But when it comes to our health, we don't think there's much need for custom medicine.

So why exactly, would we need custom medicine? If you've ever tried to cut a pill into quarters to get the right dose, or been late for an appointment because your child won't take an icky tasting antibiotic, the problem was that you had to make do with the medicine in the only form that was commercially available. When manufactured medications don't solve the problem, you don't need to compromise. You may need custom medicine.

Like the trendy ponchos and fair isle sweaters you see in every department store, custom medicine is one of those things that's "coming back"... but with a twist. 100 years ago every pharmacist worked with the patient and the doctor to create, or compound, medication that solved a particular person's problem. During the 1950s and 60s, with the advent of manufacturing, the pharmacist's role as a preparer of medications quickly changed to that of a dispenser of manufactured dosage forms. So why are customized medicines compounded by pharmacists on the rise? Because they address one of the health care profession's greatest challenges – getting patients to actually take their medicine.

The National Pharmaceutical Council estimates that prescription medication noncompliance drains an estimated \$100 billion from the US economy every year and is blamed for the deaths of more than 125,000 Americans annually. Many people either give up taking their medication or don't even have the prescription filled because they are concerned about side effects, may be allergic to one of the fillers or dislike the way the medication needs to be taken.

Fortunately, when a commercial medication isn't the right fit, those select few pharmacists who have the right equipment, training and knowledge can prepare the medication in any number of ways that will solve the problem. Let's say the dose you need falls in between two that are commercially available. Instead of skipping a day, or cutting tablets into pieces, with a physician's prescription a compounding pharmacist can change the strength of a medication so it's suited to you and your needs. If the effects of your medication need to last all day, it can be made into a slow release formula. For an oral medication, particularly for pain, that causes an upset stomach, a compounding pharmacist can often alter its form to make it into a topical cream or gel that gets absorbed through the skin. In every case, the medicine is made to fit the patient, instead of the patient being made to fit the medicine.

The need to make medicine fit the patient couldn't be more evident than in the case of women's hormone restoration. Since 1942, women in the US have been prescribed synthetic hormones with minimal testing done to determine what dose may even be appropriate for their particular bodies. The custom medicine approach incorporates not only testing a woman's hormone levels, but using the purest bio-identical hormones, indistinguishable from those created by the body to help restore proper hormone function.

Custom medicine is not just for adults. Children and pets can benefit too! For parents who have a tough time getting their children to take their medicine because of the taste, or an adult medication needs to be changed to a child-size dose, the compounding pharmacist can come to the rescue. A compounding pharmacist can also work directly with your vet to deliver a medication that works for your animal. And when it comes to kids and pets, the right flavor has a lot to do with how well the medicine goes down. Custom medicine can be made in dozens of flavors such as creamsicle, bubblegum or tutti frutti for kids, and beef, chicken, tuna or liver for pets. You know your kids' and pets' tastes so many times, you get to decide.

When it comes to you and your family's health, you should never have to compromise. So the next time you need a prescription, be sure to ask yourself and your doctor if the medication is being made to fit your needs or if your needs are being made to fit the medication.

If your doctor doesn't know about Custom Medicine, we encourage you to have him or her contact us at 978-524-4800 or visit our website at [www.custommedicine.com](http://www.custommedicine.com). We work closely with clinicians and patients in a triad of care to deliver the best possible medication solution.

*Bill Beckman, RPh is one of only 3,500 independent, community pharmacists nationwide who practices the art of pharmacy compounding that was the standard for hundreds of years. He owns Custom Medicine Pharmacenter with his wife Mary in Beverly, MA. As a registered pharmacist, he is a member of the Professional Compounding Centers of America. In addition to customizing topical pain relievers, the pharmacy specializes in pediatric medicine, discontinued product formulations, veterinary prescriptions, and bio-identical hormone replacement. Custom Medicine Pharmacenter, located at 25 Cabot Street in Beverly, is open Monday to Friday, 9:30 am - 5:30 pm and by appointment.*

*The pharmacy can be reached by calling 978-524-4800 or by emailing [info@custommedicine.com](mailto:info@custommedicine.com).*

**Sometimes** you need a pharmacist who actually uses one of these.



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