

# **UPS Medication Shipment Errors**

## **Quality Improvement Project**



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## **Background**

The Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) Pharmacy is a closed-door pharmacy providing prescription medication to individuals living with HIV and other comorbidities. We work in conjunction with United Parcel Service (UPS) for mail order prescription delivery. Seventy-five to eighty percent of all ADAP patients that fill with MSDH Pharmacy use these mail order services. We have experienced several instances where shipment errors occur with medications shipped with UPS that result in Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) breaches, delayed delivery to patients, and missing medications. Over a short period of time, several of these errors occurring have had similar issues causing the errors. Our goal is to reduce the number of medication shipment errors to provide patients with their prescription medication at an appropriate and accurate time.

## **Aim Statement**

An opportunity exists to improve the shipment errors, beginning with finding common errors and ending with developing strategies to reduce future risks of these errors occurring. This effort should improve our consumer satisfaction with shipping services for the residents of Mississippi. This process is important to improve now as we continue to use UPS to ship our medications to patients within the state. Improving this process now can increase customer satisfaction and improve shipping accuracy.

## **Benefits of successful completion**

Reducing the number of shipping errors ensures patients receive their medications accurately and in a reasonable timeframe which can improve our consumer satisfaction with shipping services. Reduction of errors will reduce HIPAA breaches, increase timeliness of medication delivery, and reduce instances of delayed/lost medications to patients.

## **Methods**

Satisfaction survey information was initially completed over the phone for baseline measurement for the months of June, August, and September of 2021. After initial baseline data, surveys were sent with New Patient Welcome Packets at the time of initial enrollment to the ADAP program and first fill with MSDH Pharmacy, as well as with ADAP recertification paperwork every six months. Phone interviews continued as needed to ensure a

minimum monthly measurement of consumer satisfaction. Information on total packages shipped were collected beginning in February 2021 and documentation of shipping errors was started in March of 2021. We hoped that these measurements can provide information on any forms of patterns to determine ways to resolve these issues.

## **Program Goal**

Our goals include maintaining a satisfaction survey result of 95% of patients responding "Very Good" on the question regarding satisfaction with UPS delivery service as we increase monthly number of responses by +5 each month and reducing shipping errors to occur in less than 1 in 5000 packages, or 0.0002%.

## **Timeframe to Achieve Goals**

6 months; September 2021 - March 2022

## **Issues**

- Meeting our goal of number of satisfaction surveys given
- Pharmacy staff remembering to document/bring documentation to Specialty Pharmacy department on errors
- Inconsistency in documentation process

## **Interventions made**

- Contacted UPS sales representative and regional directors to determine cause of errors that occur due to UPS action. Began discussion to determine what actions pharmacy can do to decrease errors
- Requested UPS to return packages to pharmacy rather than re-labeling
- Increased staff training on processes for documentation of shipment errors
- Reminded staff of training on documentation of shipping errors

## **SWOT Analysis**

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Delivery of medication in expected time frame</li><li>• High patient satisfaction surveys rates with UPS services prior to project</li><li>• Ability to provide patients with tracking information</li></ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Requirement of multiple staff trainings</li><li>• UPS lack of understanding seriousness of errors</li><li>• Errors occurring after shipment leaves the pharmacy being out of our control</li></ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Requested UPS to return packages to pharmacy rather than re-labeling</li><li>• Increased staff training on processes for documentation of shipping errors</li><li>• Reminded staff of training on documentation of shipping errors</li></ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Threats</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Honesty from patients</li><li>• Honesty from UPS</li><li>• HIPAA breaches</li><li>• Waste of medication</li></ul>

## **Results and Conclusions**

To date, a total of 24,403 packages have been shipped out of the Mississippi State Department of Health Pharmacy from January 2021 to March 2022 (Table 1). A total of 51 packages had documented shipping errors, with 40 documented reships (Table 2). The types of shipment errors were further divided among several common documented issues we experienced over the course of time (Table 3).

Tables

Table 1

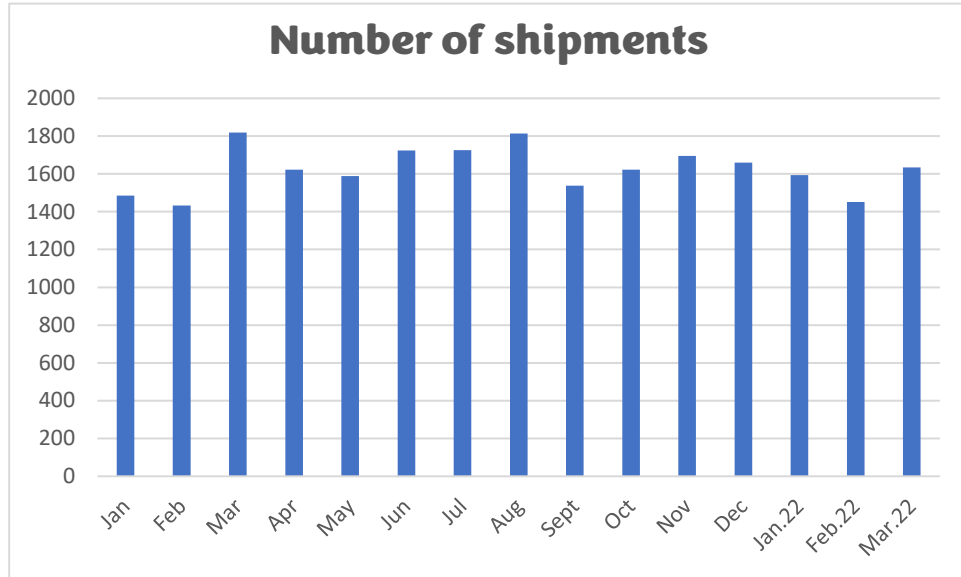


Table 2

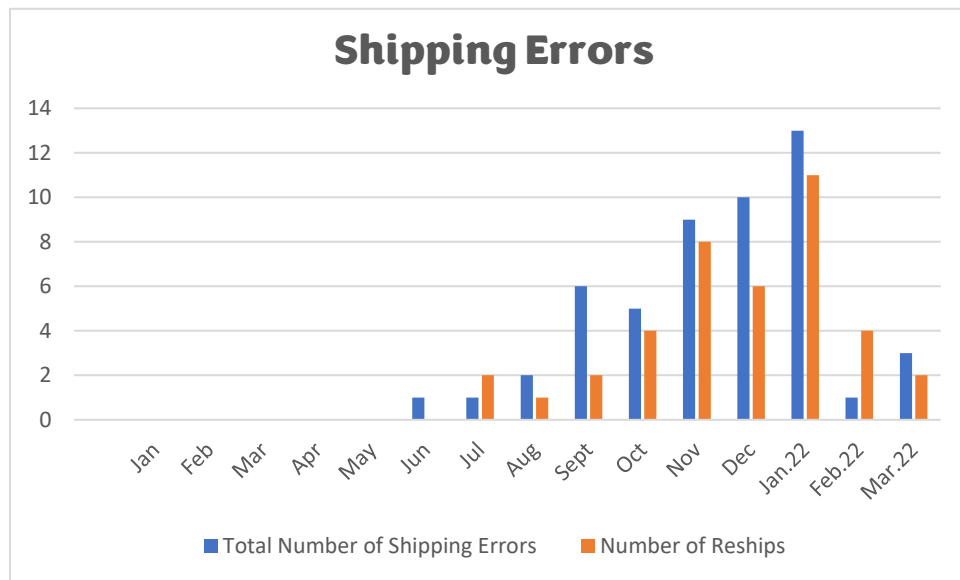
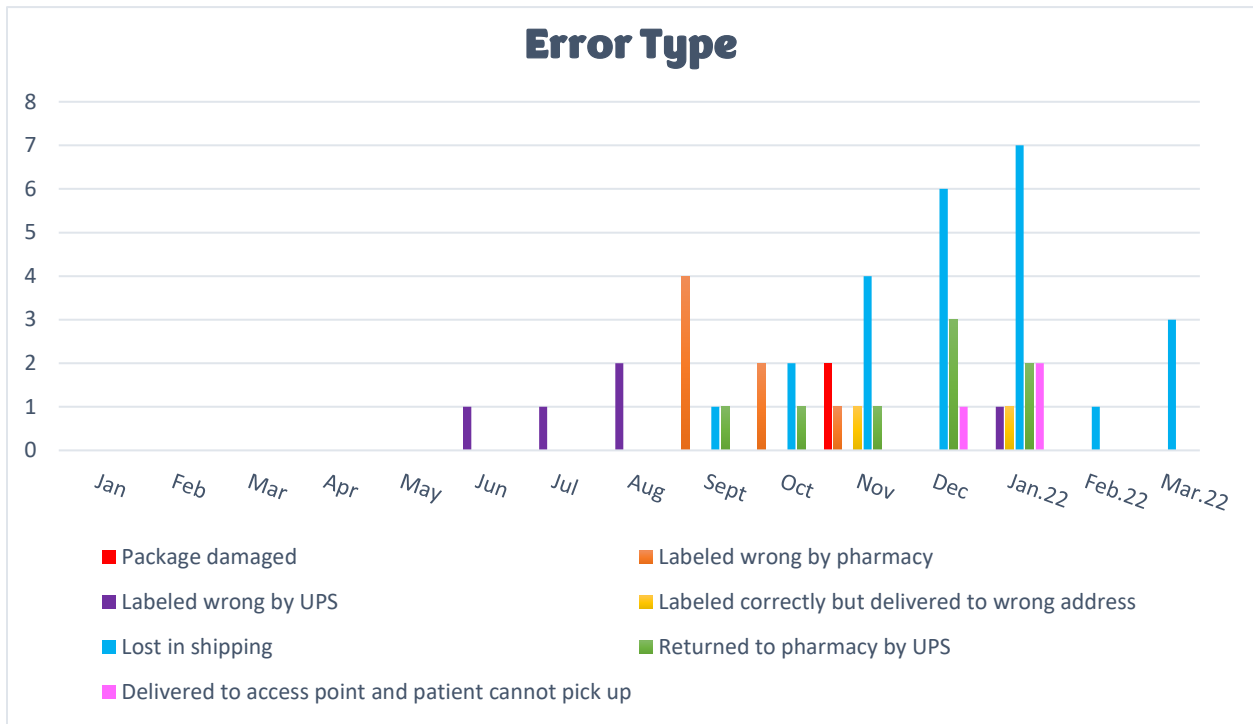


Table 3



## **Discussion**

We believe that there could be several discrepancies with the data, such as lack of documentation of all cases of shipping errors, UPS’s lack of understanding of the seriousness of errors, and satisfaction surveys down due to staffing and time management. We hope to work on various methods to improve these discrepancies, such as utilizing more training on documentation, adding the possibility of a new documentation process, more discussions with UPS representatives with a clear outline for the process of having a “wrong address”, and establishing different schedules or goals for the satisfaction surveys. Other suggestions to improving this process will be greatly appreciated. As we continue to work on establishing successful methods of decreasing the number shipment errors occurring, we hope that the data can provide us with more insight on improving our delivery system and increasing customer service.