

The Cost of Wound Care in the Era of Online Shopping in the United States

Charlie Fischer, MPH, Liam Singer, MSN, RN, Nicole Siparsky, MD, FACS, FCCM

Introduction

- Historically, post-surgical dressings were prescribed and unavailable at brick-and-mortar shops
- Online retailers now offer an expansive array of products available without a prescription, but patients pay out-of-pocket
- Aim: perform a cost analysis of commonly used dressing materials available online

Methods

- Informal survey of wound care team at an urban academic medical center in 2024 to identify commonly used retail providers and methods of payment
- Four main retailers identified: two retail pharmacy chains, one mass-market supercenter, and one major e-commerce retailer
- Survey of the website to identify the cost of commonly employed dressing materials, using the 14 identified materials in **Table 1**.

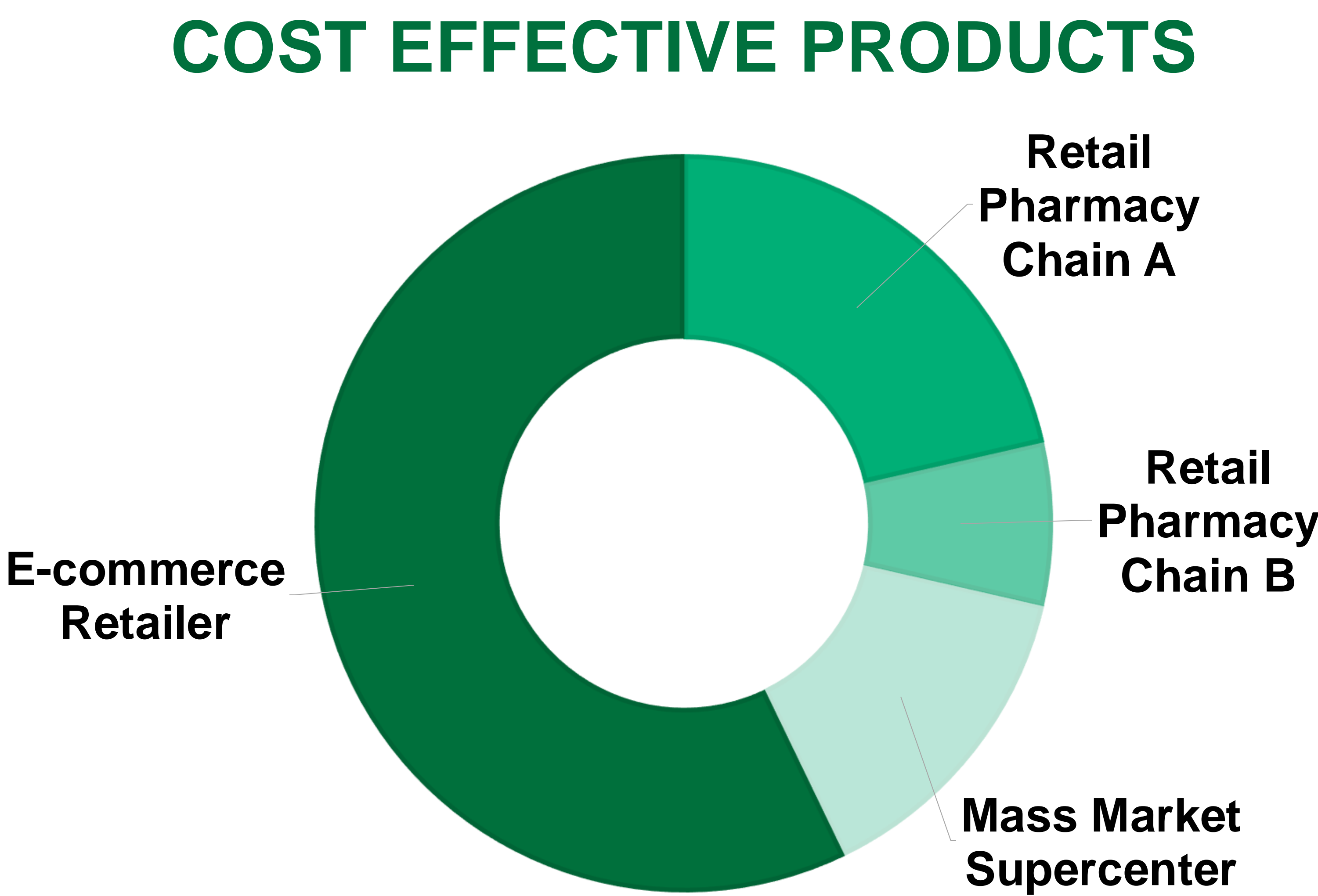


Dressings	ABD 5x9"
	Aquacel Ag Advantage Silver 4x5"
	Xeroform Petrolatum Gauze 5x9"
	Mepilex Ag Silicone Foam Dressing 4x4"
	Silicon Foam Dressing
Solutions	Silicon Border Dressing 4x4"
	Saline Wound Wash
	Sodium Hypochlorite (Dakins, ½ Strength)
	Hypochlorous Acid (Vashe)
Wraps and Other Supplies	Triethanolamine Wound Cleanser
	Kerlix Bandage Roll 4.5"x4.1yd
	Abdominal Binder
	Paper Surgical Tape
	Hypafix Tape

Table 1. Fourteen commonly used wound care materials.

Results

A slim majority of these selected products were the cheapest by unit price on the e-commerce website. However, among the other three retailers who offered both freestanding stores for walk-in service and online purchasing (retail pharmacies and the mass-market supercenter), the cost of supplies varied widely by product.



Conclusions

- Commonly used wound care products are now available without prescription and online
- The most cost-efficient recommendation is to purchase products online through an e-commerce retailer
- More research to understand how insurance providers are entering the digital age with Flexible Spending Account (FSA) and Health Savings Account (HSA) coverage for wound care products purchased online