



ORION@MSH: Use of Pharmaceutical Management Software in Resource-Limited Settings

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Resource-limited countries often lack the necessary means to manage pharmaceutical procurement, inventory, and distribution effectively. They also lack ready access to resources needed to build this capacity. Making available low-cost software, specific to their needs, is one possible approach that might help alleviate this situation.

Management Sciences for Health (MSH), in collaboration with 3i Infotech, created software to address this gap. ORION@MSH incorporates pharmaceutical supply best practices for resource-limited settings and is comprised of six interlinked modules spanning from accounting to warehousing. This software was successfully piloted at the Pharmaceutical Procurement Service of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (PPS/OECS) and St. Lucia's Central Medical Store in May 2004 and then rolled out to OECS partner Central Medical Stores of St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Dominica, and Grenada, as well as the Mission for Essential Medicinal Supplies (MEMS) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT), over the next nine months. Implementations in Ghana at GSMFEL (the CAREshop franchise), GSMF International, and the Catholic mission sector are currently under way. Additional installations are planned for the Central Medical Stores of Antigua and Montserrat, the Pharmacie de la Santé Publique (PSP) of Côte d'Ivoire, Medical Stores Limited (MSL) in Zambia, and Central Medical Stores (PROMESS) in Haiti.

The actual onsite installations usually took about five weeks and were preceded by five to six weeks of pre-installation activities, including:

- Conducting an onsite assessment to determine hardware, software, and infrastructure needs and evaluate current onsite practices.
- Purchasing the necessary hardware and software for implementation
- Extracting and preparing data at client sites for uploading into ORION@MSH
- Filling out detailed process definition forms for each module that is to be installed
- Ready client staff for installation

A typical installation usually has the following timeline and activities:

- Week 1: Walkthrough of each module being installed with all applicable staff members to identify gaps between the organization's processes and how ORION@MSH works.
- Week 2: Training for each of the modules being installed; generally 1–1½ days per module.
- Week 3: Training ends. Staff practices on system using actual data from their organization.
- Week 4: The system “goes live” and the organization begins entering data for real transactions.
- Week 5: The installer from 3i Infotech remains at the site to troubleshoot any problems that staff may run into and assist in the transition to full-time use.