

PA

ISSUE 29 | Summer 2026 | Free

HEALTH

YOUR GUIDE TO FITNESS & WELL-BEING



Every tool he needs

Structured,
empathetic support
made recovery
possible for this
Scranton man

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TALKING TO YOUR DOCTOR
ABOUT SUBSTANCE USE

STEPS TO TAKE IN AN EMERGENCY

QUIZ: DO YOU KNOW THE BEST
PLACE FOR CARE?

WELCOME

On the cover:

When alcohol became a problem, Chris Boland of Scranton found the support he needed to make a change. *Photo by Robb Malloy.*



We're your hub for health and wellness — for life.

Have tips sent to your inbox: [geisinger.org/getbalance](https://www.geisinger.org/getbalance)

Or join our club for those 55+: [geisinger.org/silvercircle](https://www.geisinger.org/silvercircle)



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Recreation for recovery

Get moving for a great cause at the Geisinger Marworth Recovery Fun Run on Sunday, Sept. 27. The 5K run/1-mile walk on the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail in Scranton supports therapeutic activities.

Scan to register:



Better Together

We've been part of the region for more than 100 years — celebrating with you at parades, fairs and sports events and supporting happenings that lift up our communities. Here's the latest on how we're connecting with you and your neighbors.

Helping local women take healthy steps • In May, a free women's health screening event hosted by Geisinger Medical Center Muncy gave area residents a convenient way to maintain wellness and detect potential health concerns. Attendees could choose from options including mammograms, cervical cancer screenings, blood pressure checks and cholesterol and glucose screenings.



Bucknell event honors Geisinger Miracle Kid • At the Baseball Home Run for Life, Bucknell University partner athlete Jonathan Adelman and the Bucknell baseball team honored a Geisinger 2019 Miracle Kid, Martin Wrobel of Ashland. Martin ran the bases and high-fived members of his Geisinger care team along the way.

Protecting Scranton Half Marathon athletes • To care for the 2,400 runners in the 13.1-mile Scranton Half Marathon, more than 30 Geisinger clinicians volunteered to supply emergency medical treatment and athletic training services. And another 50 Geisinger employees joined in the fun as runners or walkers themselves!



Leadership tips from a college champion • At February's Juniata River Valley Chamber of Commerce Men's Summit, Penn State wrestling standout and Geisinger athlete partner Mitchell Mesenbrink shared his insights. He spoke about mental strength, physical health and how leadership is learned through example and reinforced by relationships.

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By Beth Kaszuba

Thriving in recovery



When Chris Boland's friends and family staged an intervention, the Scranton native, 50, wasn't angry or ashamed.

His initial feeling?

Relief.

He was 34 at the time, a teacher and basketball coach with a fulfilling life. But he had a serious drinking problem, too. One that he didn't hide, but which he couldn't control, either.

"At night, I would go out," he recalls. "I had a 'going home' problem, as some of my friends called it. I was always like, what's the next thing? There was never enough."

He wasn't always dependent on alcohol. In high school, he was a dedicated athlete with no interest in partying. That changed when he went to college at Villanova University in Philadelphia.

Drinking was normalized there, and if Mr. Boland did a little more than his friends, it didn't really seem like a problem. But as he grew older and people around him settled down, he continued to drink to excess.

His disease led to legal problems and cost him a good job in finance. He drifted to both coasts, then moved to New York City with his then-girlfriend, Kelly — now his wife.

"When I went there, I didn't have a connection to the community," he says. "It really put gasoline on my problem — which I'm thankful for. It ignited it."

Loved ones step in

Behind the scenes, as Mr. Boland's drinking spiraled out of control, his partner was conferring with his family. On Nov. 16, 2009, they staged an intervention in his parents' living room.

"I thought, 'I'm glad you guys are making the call,' because I was incapable of it," he says. "I knew it had to come to an end."

Geisinger Marworth, a treatment center in Waverly, near Scranton, was a logical and familiar choice to start his recovery. A family member had been treated there, and Mr. Boland had visited. Some local people with recovery experience also had connections to Marworth and helped steer him to the facility.

From day one, he felt comfortable, and he can still list by name a whole group of Marworth staff who helped him acclimate with "no judgment."

Samantha Fitz-Gerald, PsyD, clinical director at Geisinger Marworth, says every member of



“Now I can be who I'm meant to be.”

the care team brings something deeply personal to treating substance use disorder.

"We're all coming from an empathetic approach," she says. "All of us have reasons for working in the field of addiction, whether it's personal experience, having family members with addiction or wanting to help someone change."

Steady improvement

Mr. Boland spent 28 days at Marworth, time he calls "great."

"At no point was I like, 'Get me out of here,'" he says. "Because I knew I was improving rapidly."

He explains that Marworth offered him compassion and the ability to get better at his own pace. But he wasn't allowed to languish in his room, either. He was involved in group and individual counseling, and he appreciated visits from family. "They were an incredible support," he says.

And as he became strong enough to leave inpatient care, thanks to an individualized care plan, he benefited from guidance to help him succeed outside Marworth, too.

Mr. Boland admits he was afraid to leave the security of Marworth's structured program. But, he says, "They do a very good job of telling you what's next. They don't cast you out to the wind and say, 'Best of luck.'"

He was connected to nearby groups and meetings, building a community of people who would continue to help him navigate sobriety. He attended meetings regularly and followed all the steps that statistically lead to success.

"I went into Marworth with no tools in my tool belt," he says. "When I left, like Batman, I had all these tricks, and now I'm able to help others, too."

Fostering a lifelong connection

Today, Mr. Boland is a happily married father and alumni director at Geisinger College of Health Sciences. He feels privileged to share his experiences, and he volunteers with Marworth.

"Now I can be who I'm meant to be," he says. And when someone calls asking for help, he's eager to repay all the support he got at Marworth and beyond.

"I've never been part of anything where people are so welcoming and willing to help a stranger," he says. "They're like, 'I got your back and whatever you need, here's my number' — and they mean it."

His message to others considering treatment?

"Call Marworth, talk to someone in the AA program or ask a loved one for help," Mr. Boland says. "If you aren't able to ask for help, then please trust your family and friends if they approach you. You can take your life back and be happy and healthy again."

For Mr. Boland, Marworth changed the course of his life, and he will be forever grateful. "I love that place," he says. "It saved me and thousands of other people."

Because of you

Generous contributions to Geisinger Health Foundation's Gift of Hope fund have helped hundreds of lower-income, uninsured and under-insured people afford treatment at Geisinger Marworth. You can help: [geisinger.org/becauseofyou](https://www.geisinger.org/becauseofyou)

Let's talk:

Recovering from substance use

Expert answers to your toughest questions

The best time to talk with your family doctor, another member of your healthcare team or a recovery specialist about a substance use disorder is before you're certain you need help.

“Addiction is a disease, just like cancer. You wouldn't hesitate to raise concerns about that illness with your doctor. Don't wait to discuss concerns about substance use, either.”

- Samantha Fitz-Gerald, PsyD

Samantha Fitz-Gerald, PsyD, of Geisinger Marworth, an inpatient and outpatient treatment center in Waverly, helps you get this tough conversation started with a trusted provider. Keep in mind they may answer differently, depending on your situation. And rest assured, these conversations are confidential.



1 I have a few drinks every week – maybe most nights, actually. That doesn't mean I have a problem, does it?

You're smart to ask and get ahead of your health. And the fact that you're curious tells me you might be quietly concerned.

Ask yourself, "Has my reliance on alcohol or other substances increased in recent months or years? Do I 'need' a substance to relax or be social? Is this issue negatively affecting my relationships or work?"

If you're starting to use the word "need," or often wondering when you can drink or use a substance again, it's probably time to think seriously about whether you need support to quit.

Why ask? An objective perspective helps you be honest with yourself so you can make a decision.

3 But no one knows I have a problem. If I seek treatment, won't my family and friends be disappointed in me?

Chances are, you're not hiding your substance use as well as you think you are. There's also a good chance some people who love you are hoping you'll reach out. They might just be proud of you – and the day will come when you're proud of yourself, too. Hiding a problem takes a lot of effort. So does recovery. But that's effort you put in for a great cause: your health and safety.

Why ask? Keeps you from relying on assumptions you've made about yourself and others.

2 If I start going to meetings or rehab, aren't people going to judge me?

Many people feel like reliance on a substance is a sign of weakness. That's not true. It's an illness that requires – and responds to – treatment. And there are lots of options, from talking to a substance abuse counselor or behavioral therapist to medication management and inpatient or outpatient treatment.

Two things to keep in mind as you consider getting help:

First, your health and relationships are paramount. Getting treatment can save your life, your job and your connections to loved ones.

Second, seeking treatment can be liberating. You'll probably be surprised to learn how many others around you have sought treatment, too. And you'll build a whole community of people who are right there with you, sharing their stories and lending you a shoulder to lean on.

Why ask? Helps you see the bigger picture and how treatment has changed other people's lives.

4 If I'm not sure I have a problem, it's too early to take a drastic step like calling a rehab facility, right?

It never hurts to reach out. The people at Marworth – and other treatment centers – are kind, welcoming and knowledgeable. They're not going to "convince" you to do anything. They're going to help you determine the right path for you, with empathy and understanding. Helping people is their life's mission, and they've seen the entire spectrum of addiction. Talk to them. They'll listen.

Why ask? Opens the door so you can take a step toward getting help.

Learn more about Geisinger Marworth at marworth.org.

By Kimberly Adler-Morelli

Rigorous standards in patient safety and error prevention¹

Geisinger's western region

Care where it's needed

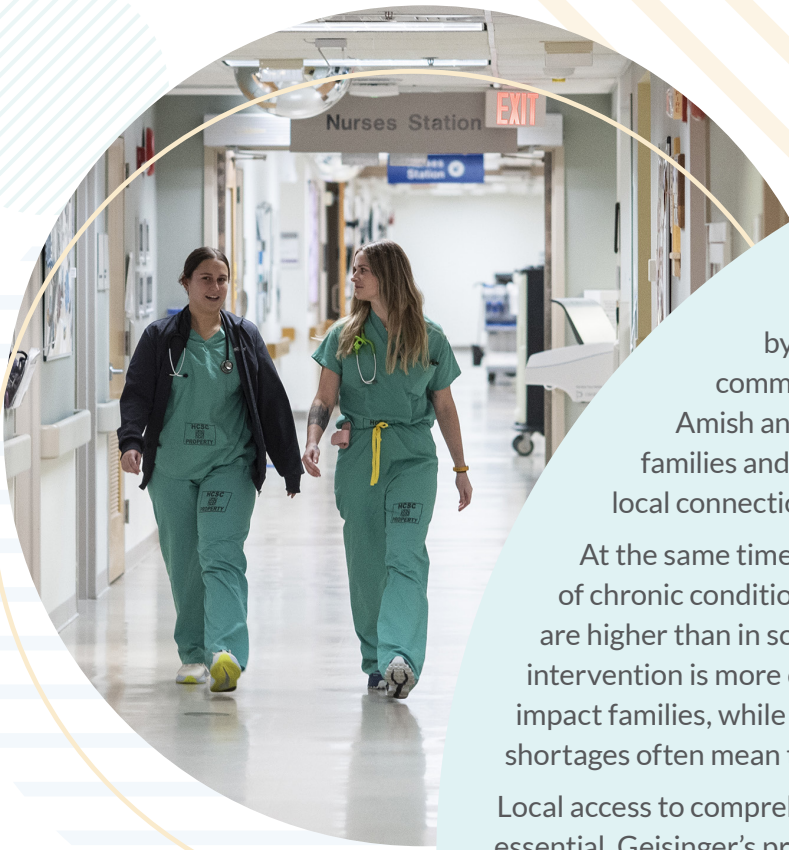
5-star rating for readmission, mortality, safety of care and timely and effective care²

Outstanding performance among rural hospitals³

Strong clinical outcomes, patient experience and overall value⁴

Excellent care in 15 adult specialties⁵





In the westernmost part of Geisinger's footprint, Mifflin, Centre, Juniata and Huntingdon counties are defined by wide-open farmland, small towns and close-knit communities. The region is home to one of the state's largest Amish and Mennonite populations, alongside long-established families and growing retiree communities who value self-reliance, local connections and care that respects tradition.

At the same time, rural life brings distinct healthcare challenges. Rates of chronic conditions such as diabetes, certain cancers and heart disease are higher than in some urban areas. Without specialty care nearby, early intervention is more difficult. Opioid misuse and overdose continue to impact families, while transportation barriers and healthcare workforce shortages often mean traveling long distances for care.

Local access to comprehensive, high-quality healthcare isn't a luxury — it's essential. Geisinger's presence in the region brings advanced services, education and preventive care close to home, strengthening communities.

Over the years, a quiet transformation has yielded powerful results: Nationally recognized hospital care in Lewistown. Expanded specialty services in State College. Better access for Bellefonte residents. Geisinger is setting the standard for care in rural and small-town America.

Small-town feel, national-level care

Since joining Geisinger in 2013, Geisinger Lewistown Hospital has grown from a respected community facility into a regional hub for advanced, patient-centered care. Today, it stands out not only for what it offers locally, but for how consistently it delivers care that meets — and often exceeds — national benchmarks.

Watch Geisinger Lewistown Hospital's ER in action: [geisinger.org/glher](https://www.geisinger.org/glher)

Continued on next page

Upgraded technology to support care delivery

Because of you

A \$1.25 million gift from the Better Together Fund, established by First Quality Enterprises LLC, helps to support healthcare initiatives at Geisinger Lewistown Hospital. You can support care in rural communities, too: [geisinger.org/becauseofyou](https://www.geisinger.org/becauseofyou)

Continued
from previous
page

Enhanced
obstetric care
with midwifery
services, updated
birthing spaces
and teleNICU
capabilities

Top-notch
infection
prevention⁶

Transitioning
to private patient
rooms for better
rest and recovery

Beyond the hospital: Outpatient care

Centre County residents are benefiting from expanded access to specialty and outpatient services after improvements to Geisinger Healthplex State College.

- Redesigned pediatrics area with child-friendly spaces and separate “well” and “sick” waiting areas to reduce the spread of germs.
- Orthopaedics expansion has nearly tripled patient capacity while supporting advanced technology, including high-precision joint replacement surgeries.

A new ConvenientCare walk-in clinic in Bellefonte cares for minor medical needs 7 days a week, including evenings and weekends. It’s part of Geisinger Bellefonte, which relocated to Buckaroo Lane in 2024, consolidating urgent care, primary care, imaging and lab services into one location.

Orthopaedic
surgeries with fewer
complications and
readmissions⁷

Geisinger

MAIN ENTRANCE

Growing the next generation of caregivers

Education is a central part of Geisinger's Lewistown campus and a key investment in the region's long-term health. Residency programs, pharmacy training and nursing education programs all grow the local healthcare workforce while strengthening care delivery for the community.

A cornerstone of that effort: the Geisinger School of Nursing (SON), located in a newly renovated building in the heart of Lewistown. The school grants an Associate Degree in Nursing and prepares students with hands-on education to care for patients in rural and community-based settings. For Lewistown and the surrounding area, the SON represents opportunity and continuity — training caregivers who are likely to live, work and serve in the region they call home.

Highest stroke care designation⁸ plus tele-stroke services

“Improvements at Geisinger Lewistown Hospital represent a meaningful investment in the health of our community. We're making sure patients have the care they need, close to home.”

A.J. Hartsock, Associate Vice President of Operations for Geisinger's Western Region

Info circles apply to Geisinger Lewistown Hospital.

1. "A" Hospital Safety Grade from The Leapfrog Group every quarter since 2019
2. 5-Star Quality Rating from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, maintained since 2021
3. Top 100 Rural & Community Hospital from the Chartis Center for Rural Health
4. Inaugural Forbes Top Hospitals list
5. U.S. News & World Report designation as a Best Hospital
6. Zero hospital-acquired methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* infection rate, according to recent CMS data
7. Blue Cross Blue Shield Blue Distinction® Center for Specialty Care
8. Primary stroke designation with Gold Plus recognition from the American Heart Association's Get with the Guidelines® program

Be the help before help arrives

1 Heart attack: Know the signs – and mind the clock

Heart attacks don't always look like they do on TV. Some people feel chest pressure. Others feel pain in the arm, jaw or back. You might feel short of breath, sweaty, nauseated or fatigued.

If you're with someone having a heart attack:

- Call 911 immediately.
- Stay with them and follow dispatcher instructions.
- Help them sit comfortably and loosen tight clothing.
- If they collapse and stop breathing, begin hands-only CPR: 30 chest compressions, 2 inches deep, about 100 per minute.

If you think you're having a heart attack:

- Call 911 and stay on the phone.
- Take prescribed nitroglycerin if you have it.
- Don't drive yourself anywhere.
- Stay as calm as possible until help arrives.



When emergencies happen, they rarely give you time to think. Your heart pounds. Your brain scrambles. And suddenly you're wishing you knew just a little more about what to do in those crucial first moments.

"Every minute matters," says Deborah Erdman, RN, trauma outreach nurse coordinator at Geisinger Medical Center. "Knowing the basics can truly save a life."

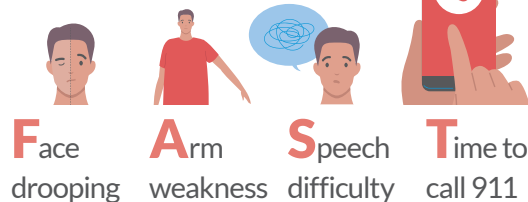
The good news? These skills aren't complicated. Geisinger's trauma and emergency outreach teams spend their days teaching our communities exactly how to respond.

Prepare yourself by knowing these 3 emergency techniques.

2 Stroke: Think FAST

A stroke happens when blood flow to the brain is interrupted. That means the faster you act, the more brain you save. **Never** "wait it out."

Know what to watch for and do with the acronym **FAST**:



While waiting for an ambulance:

- Help the person sit or lie down safely.
- Don't drive the person (or yourself) anywhere. Emergency treatment needs to start ASAP.
- Check for breathing and give CPR if needed.
- Note exactly when symptoms started to help doctors diagnose and treat quickly.
- Don't take aspirin or eat/drink unless instructed.

3 Drug overdose: Save a life with Narcan

An opioid overdose slows or stops breathing, which can cause brain damage or death. Key signs include pinpoint pupils, blue lips or nails, limpness, shallow breathing, choking sounds or unconsciousness.

If you suspect opioid overdose:

1. Call 911 immediately.
2. Give Narcan® (naloxone) as soon as possible.
3. If the person doesn't respond in 2 to 3 minutes, give another dose.
4. Try to keep the person awake and breathing.
5. Lay them on their side to prevent choking.
6. Stay until emergency responders arrive.



Most pharmacies provide Narcan for free. Geisinger also hosts periodic Narcan distribution events so everyone can keep this lifesaving tool on hand.



Want to learn how to stop life-threatening bleeding?
Attend a free program – visit [geisinger.org/injuryprevention](https://www.geisinger.org/injuryprevention).

Know where to go



Getting the right care, right when you need it

Choosing the **right** place for care — whether it's your primary care doctor, urgent care (in-person or virtual) or the emergency room — means you get the treatment you need. A bonus? It keeps healthcare running smoothly for everyone else, too. When you head to the appropriate location, you can avoid unnecessary costs and make sure emergency teams stay available for true life-threatening situations.



Virtual urgent care

Get fast medical help for common issues like colds, rashes and infections — all from the comfort of home. If you're a Geisinger patient, go to [geisinger.org/urgent](https://www.geisinger.org/urgent) to start a virtual visit.



Need a primary care doctor?

Call: 570-325-1821

Visit: [geisinger.org/carepartner](https://www.geisinger.org/carepartner)

This quiz is for general informational purposes only, and every situation is different. If you're unsure where to go for care, contact a healthcare professional. Call 911 in an emergency.

Take this quick quiz to test your care navigation smarts!

1 Your ear has been clogged since your dip in the pool a few days ago. Which is the right choice?

- A. Your primary care physician (PCP)
- B. Your friend who's a swim coach
- C. The emergency room

Hint: Who handles checkups, questions and everyday care needs?

2 You've got a nasty sunburn and want help right now — ideally without leaving your couch. Best option?

- A. Virtual urgent care
- B. The emergency room
- C. Social media

Hint: Some issues that aren't life-threatening can be cared for fast from home.

3 You cut your finger on a piece of glass and think you might need stitches. Where do you go?

- A. The nearest sewing supply store
- B. ConvenientCare walk-in urgent care
- C. Virtual urgent care

Hint: Stitches are best left to professionals who can do hands-on work (no pun intended).

4 You feel crushing chest pain and start having trouble breathing. What's the move?

- A. Wait and see
- B. Virtual urgent care
- C. The emergency room

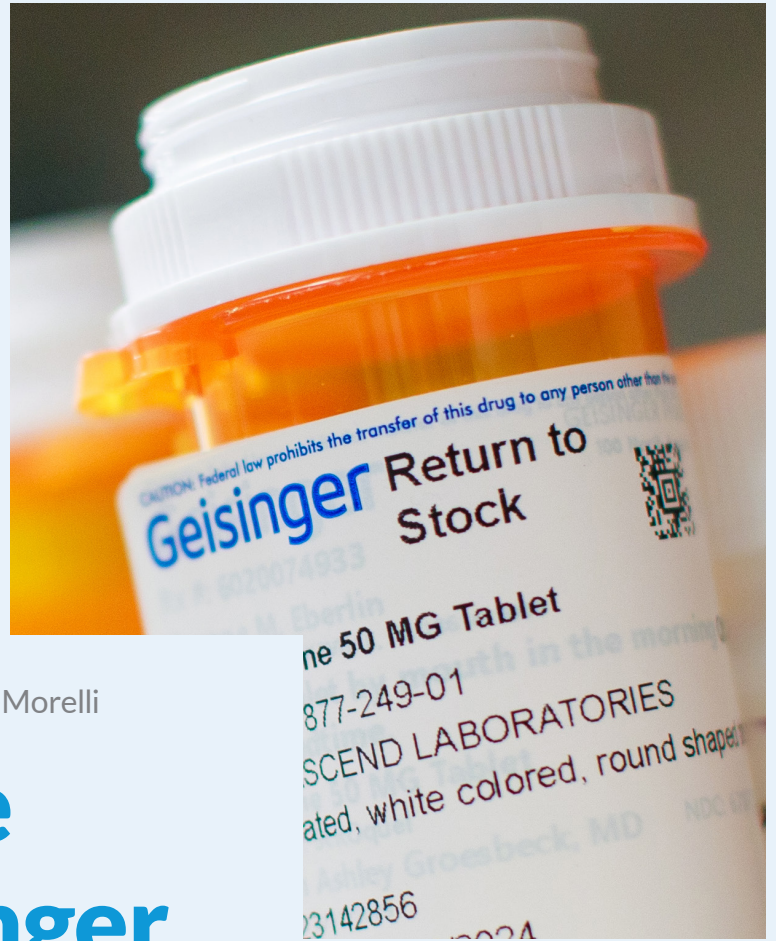
Hint: These are dangerous symptoms only a hospital should handle.

5 Which is the best option for monitoring your diabetes and making sure you stay on track?

- A. Your PCP
- B. ConvenientCare walk-in urgent care
- C. Your smartwatch

Hint: One of these is a perfect partner for chronic conditions and long-term health goals — no batteries needed.

How did you do? Share your game with us and we'll send you a prize! Email it to pahealth@geisinger.edu or mail to PA Health, M.C. 40-20, 100 N. Academy Ave., Danville, PA 17822.



By Kimberly Adler-Morelli

Inside Geisinger Mail-Order Pharmacy



Automation, accuracy and innovation

In a quiet corner of Elysburg sits Geisinger's most technologically advanced pharmacy operation — a mail-order facility capable of verifying, filling and shipping thousands of prescriptions every day with speed, precision and remarkable efficiency. For Geisinger Health Plan members, it's convenient. But on a larger scale, Geisinger Mail-Order Pharmacy represents a cutting-edge approach to improving health outcomes, reducing costs and reimagining what modern pharmacy care can look like.

Automation is a big factor in efficiency here. Expansion within the last 2 years has more than doubled its original capacity. A team that once filled about 3,000 prescriptions in a day can now process up to 6,700 in a 10-hour shift — a dramatic improvement made possible by a sophisticated conveyor system, precise robotics and meticulous safety protocols.

At the heart of the technology is an RFID-enabled workflow. After a pharmacist reviews and verifies the prescription, every order enters the system in its own small blue tote, equipped with an RFID chip. As totes travel along the conveyor, sensors communicate with the chip to guide each tote to the exact stations needed for its unique order. It's a fully orchestrated process: stopping where medications must be added,

moving to another pharmacist for verification, then continuing to the packing and shipping stations.

This automation doesn't just make the system fast — it makes it remarkably accurate. Locked dispensing "cells" open only for the correct medication, and barcode scanning at every point in the workflow means that the slightest mismatch triggers a red-light alert. A green light is the only signal that allows the process to move forward. The result? A 99% accuracy rate, backed by 2 pharmacist verifications.

One of the facility's standout features is its "robot vending machine," a Parata system used for the most frequently prescribed drugs, such as cholesterol medications, blood pressure drugs and diabetes therapies. When a tote routes to the Parata station, the robot dispenses the exact number of pills, applies a label, photographs the contents for verification and places the sealed vial into the tote. Pharmacy technicians restock and maintain the machine, keeping it efficient and reliable.

Safety is paramount, and it extends beyond automation. The facility is designed to manage high-risk medications while strictly adhering to federal and state regulations. Pharmacists and technicians follow rigorous procedures to safely dispense and ship every medication.

Temperature-sensitive medications get their own specialized treatment. The pharmacy keeps several days' worth of inventory on hand, stored precisely according to manufacturer guidelines. They regularly test their shipment methods using temperature

sensors to confirm that medications remain stable during delivery. Non-refrigerated medications typically ship via USPS. But the pharmacy uses UPS or FedEx for refrigerated or otherwise temperature-controlled drugs to be sure they're handled properly.

The team behind all this technology is just as impressive. The mail-order pharmacy employs around 80 staff members, including pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, support associates, inventory specialists and a dedicated call center. The on-site call center handles questions from patients, providers and retail pharmacies, coordinating care and maintaining continuity — especially useful for members who travel or temporarily need medication out of state. With licensure across 18 states, the team can even arrange courtesy fills when needed.

The upshot of all this innovation? Convenience. For people who rely on maintenance medications, the mail-order service eliminates regular trips to the pharmacy. Auto-refill options mean patients get 90-day supplies right when they need them, without having to request a new refill each time. Delivery typically takes about 3 business days from prescription receipt to arrival at a patient's home.

With so-called "pharmacy deserts" growing due to local pharmacy closures, many communities don't have easy access to necessary medications. Geisinger Mail-Order Pharmacy is proving that technology, paired with expert clinical oversight, can make healthcare faster, safer and more dependable. It's not just a pharmacy — it's the future of medication delivery.

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