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Pharmacy's Clients Get Custom Care

By **KERRI FIVECOAT-CAMPBELL**
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O'Brien Pharmacy, next to **St. Luke's Hospital** in Kansas City, doesn't resemble the chain-store pharmacies that most consumers are familiar with.

Its decor in soft colors and artwork that the owners have collected from around the world are meant to give customers a sense of serenity. The emphasis on mixing special drugs evokes an era when family-owned pharmacies were nestled in neighborhoods and dominated the main floors of medical office buildings.

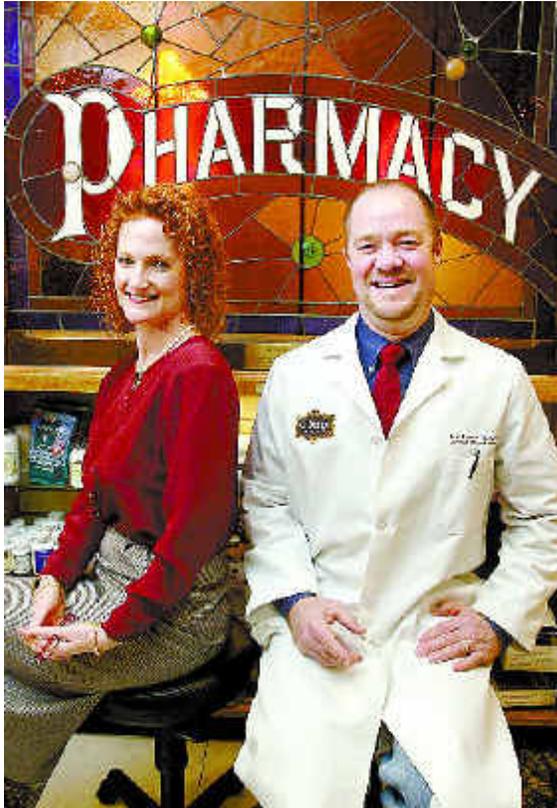
But make no mistake, the pharmacy's owners are committed to maintaining O'Brien's reputation as a leader in the pharmaceutical industry.

"We hardly sell any over-the-counter medications," said Lisa Everett, who co-owns the business with her brother, Eric Everett. "We specialize in compounding medications that are hard to find."

Compounding pharmacies mix drugs to make medications that are not in enough demand to make it profitable for the large pharmaceutical companies to make.

Lisa Everett said that when her father, Harry Everett, co-founded O'Brien pharmacy with Henry O'Brien in 1962, most pharmacies still compounded their own medications. Everett described her father as a "forward thinker," who tried to stay on the cutting edge of the industry. For example, Everett said that O'Brien Pharmacy was one of the first pharmacies in the country to be located in a medical building.

"They also kept meticulous handwritten records on each of their customers, which helped in providing their care," Everett said. "And then we were one of the first to convert those records to computers."



DELORES JOHNSON/The Kansas City Star
Lisa Everett and her brother, Eric Everett, are the co-owners of O'Brien Pharmacy, 4321 Washington St.

O'Brien passed away soon after the pharmacy was opened, but Everett's father kept the O'Brien name on the business. After graduating from the University of Missouri-Kansas City pharmaceutical school in the mid-1970s, Lisa Everett joined the business. Eric Everett joined as a pharmacist in the 1980s. Harry Everett retired in 1988.

Lisa Everett said that about 20 years ago, family-owned pharmacies faced a crisis when insurance companies introduced prescription drug cards, driving down profits for pharmacists and forcing stores to offer more over-the-counter products to be competitive.

Everett said that the family rejected signing contracts with insurance companies. "Most of the chain stores took away compounding, but we decided to continue to do it and retain our high standards of practice," Everett said.

One of the drugs that O'Brien Pharmacy offers is hyaluronidase, a drug used by doctors during cataract surgery. John Hagan, an ophthalmologist in Kansas City, said that he has purchased hyaluronidase through O'Brien Pharmacy for about four years and has written industry research articles about the drug and O'Brien Pharmacy.

"This drug has proved useful for the past 100 years and patients complain of less discomfort during surgery when the drug is used," Hagan said. "I've also conducted due diligence and toured the lab where the drug is compounded and found it to be absolutely wonderful."

O'Brien Pharmacy occupies about 2,800 square feet in the Medical Plaza III building at 4321 Washington St. Lisa Everett said that O'Brien Pharmacy maintains high standards and that the Professional Compounding Centers of America recognized Eric Everett in 2002 as Compounding Pharmacist of the Year.

Five years ago the Everetts, who also are clinical nutritionists, added the 1,200-square-foot **Kansas City Holistic Center**, adjacent to O'Brien Pharmacy. The center has two family physicians and a mental health therapist. The center also sells vitamin and herbal supplements.

"About 70 percent of herbs that are on the market are useless because they don't have the dosages they report having," said Everett. "We only carry products that have been through testing and we still periodically send them out to have them tested ourselves."

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- O'Brien Pharmacy in Kansas City specializes in compounding medications.
 - Five years ago, the business added the 1,200-square-foot Kansas City Holistic Center. The center offers patients the opportunity to integrate traditional Western medicine with holistic remedies.