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### Drug stores will get clinics

Owner of Super D, Ike's signs Texas firm for health initiative

By David Flaum

[Contact](#)

May 30, 2007

A Texas company is poised to launch medical clinics in local Ike's and Super D stores -- maybe even Walgreens stores -- by early next year.

USA Drug, the owner of Ike's and Super D, inked a deal with Dallas-based MedBasics to put clinics in up to 60 USA Drug stores during the next three years.

"We expect to do something in Memphis late this year or early next," said Joe Courtright, USA Drug president and CEO.

The first will most likely be in one of the company's four Ike's stores, he said. USA Drug also has 18 Super Ds in the Memphis area.

"It makes sense at Ike's, especially because we have optical centers there," as well as pharmacies, Courtright said.

"The goal is to set ourselves more as a health care provider to our customers," he said. "You can't look at a clinic on its own as a major profit center. You have to look at it as improving the total patient offering."

Clinics will be staffed by nurse practitioners, be open 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Mondays through Saturdays, and have hours on Sundays if pharmacies are open, said Brian Jones, chairman and CEO of MedBasics.

A basic office visit will cost \$49. Other services, from rapid strep tests to full wellness exams, cost extra.

MedBasics has two clinics in Dallas supermarkets and 23 others under construction, Jones said.

"Consumers want to get their medical care, their prescriptions and their chicken soup all in one venue," he said.

As for pharmacies, medical clinics provide convenience for people in high-income areas, and their affordability opens them up to people without medical insurance or who have problems covering their health care costs, Jones said.

"It has potential," said Dr. Valerie Arnold, president of the Memphis Medical Society. "It provides good access (to medical care) for people who don't have appointments or who have emergencies."

But Arnold, a psychologist, expressed concern about supervision and continuity of care.

Operators have to make sure the nurse practitioners running the clinics have proper supervision from a physician, she said.

Tennessee Board of Medical Examiners rules say a supervising physician with expertise in the same specialty as the nurse practitioner must be available for consultation at all times.

The nurse practitioner and physician must set standards of care, and the physician must check cases and charts to make sure they are met, the rules say.

MedBasics will have a medical director to do such reviews and to be on call to answer questions, Jones said.

Arnold also said clinics may lack continuity of care -- the same person who sees you one time may not see you the next. The nurse practitioners won't know the patients like a primary-care doctor would, she said.

MedBasics is not trying to make its clinics people's medical homes, Jones said, although about half of the patients who visit its facilities have no insurance and no primary-care physician.

"It's an adjunct to a medical home," he said.

MedBasics and USA Drug probably will face competition.

Although one clinic that opened last year in a Kroger on Hickory Hill has closed, Walgreens acquired Take Care Health Care Systems -- a firm that operates 52 clinics in five Midwestern cities -- and plans to expand that network. Walgreens has 60 of its own.

"We are looking at expanding into other markets," said Michael Polzin, a spokesman. Whether that included Memphis hasn't been decided, he said.

-- *David Flaum: 529-2330*

## MEDBASICS

Headquarters: Dallas, Texas

Top person: Brian Jones, chairman and chief executive officer.

Founded: 2006

Business: Operating medical clinics in supermarkets and drug stores.

Clinic size: 150 to 650 square feet.

Phone: 214-357-7771

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