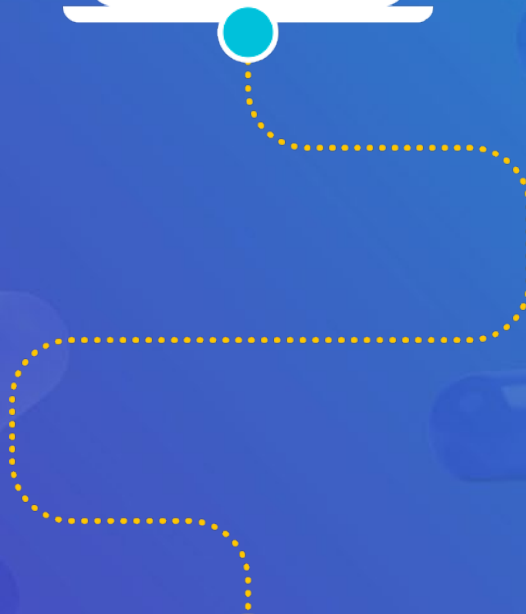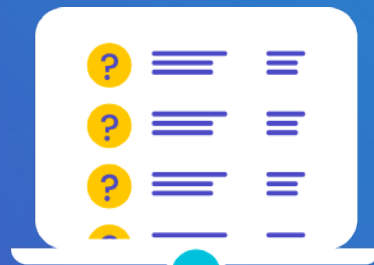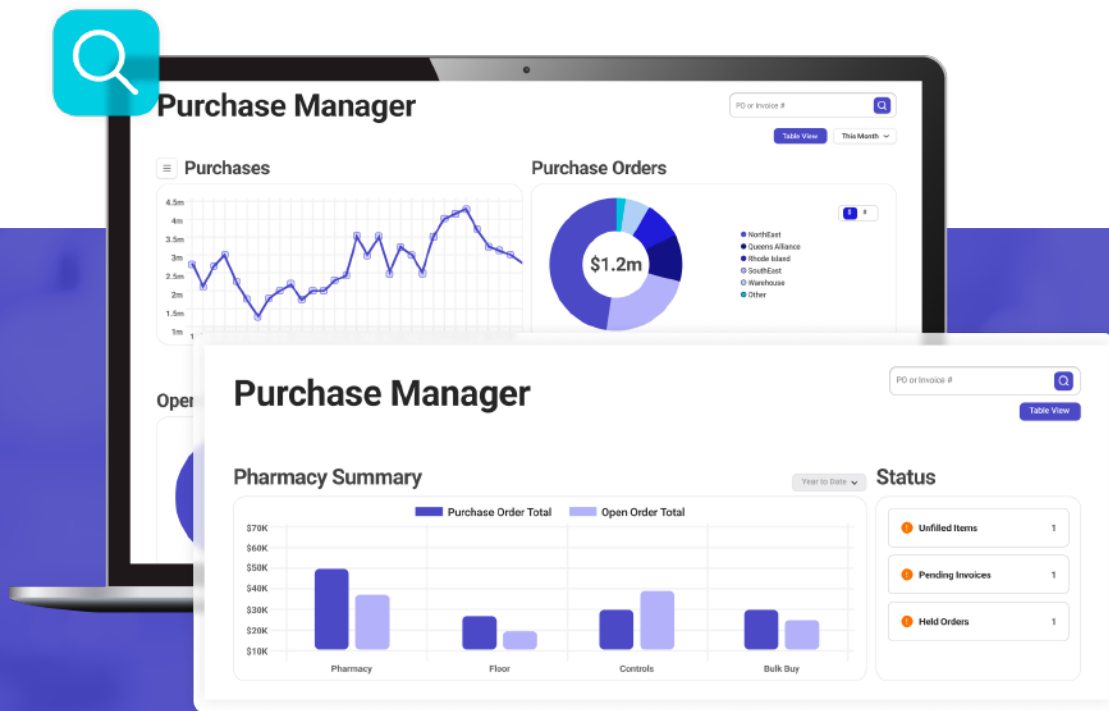**Buying Guide for**

Health System Pharmacy Procurement, Inventory and Compliance Solutions

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Why Pharmacy Procurement Software is Vital for Today's Health Systems

Health systems face unprecedented challenges that make efficient pharmacy procurement, inventory management and compliance more critical than ever. Rising drug costs, ongoing staffing shortages, persistent drug shortages and increasingly complex DSCSA compliance requirements put immense pressure on health systems. Without the right tools in place, these systems risk their pharmacies overspending on products, losing time due to inefficient processes and incurring penalties due to non-compliance.

Pharmacy procurement software provides a comprehensive solution, allowing health systems to streamline pharmacy procurement, optimize inventory and ensure compliance. However, not all pharmacy procurement software platforms are created equal. To truly maximize cost savings, operational efficiency and compliance, health systems need a comprehensive, data-driven solution that unifies procurement, inventory and compliance, while integrating flexibly with existing systems.

Here's what health systems need to look for when selecting pharmacy procurement software, pharmacy inventory management tools and pharmacy compliance software, including DSCSA compliance.

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Pharmacy Procurement Challenges and Solutions to Overcome Them

Challenge	Impact	Solution
Drug shortages leave health systems paying more for medications and scrambling to meet patient needs.	• Supply chain disruptions due to domestic and overseas volatility and regulatory challenges • Fewer manufacturers produce fewer items • Q1 2023 was the highest peak since 2014	• Expand vendor portfolio (secondaries/tertiaries, group procurement organizations or "GPOs," direct-from-manufacturers, etc.) • Use automation in pharmacy to quickly find comparables and alternates without compromising primary vendor compliance. • Enhance visibility into potential shortages.
Staffing shortages mean smaller pharmacy teams have to do more (even as patient needs grow more complex).	• Increased burnout • Pharmacists and techs leaving the industry • Pharmacy school enrollment decreasing • Increased job dissatisfaction driving staff turnover	• Automate manual tasks and streamline processes. • Free staff from administrative tasks so they can get back to working at the "top of their license."
Rising drug prices lead to compressed margins on prescription drugs.	• For example, high-cost oncology and specialty drugs, biosimilars, GLP1s, etc. • Manufacturers launch new drugs with higher prices and commercial plans adjust to compensate for Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) impacts • PBMs change formularies due to lower margins	• Leverage pharmacy procurement software to automatically assess the best procurement option using multiple variables. • Optimize primary vendor and GPO compliance alongside expanded vendor portfolio.
DSCSA compliance now has more complicated requirements.	• Package-level verification and electronic storage • Need to coordinate with trade partners • Risk audits, fines, suspension and legal sanctions	• Rely on automation in pharmacy to match relevant procurement data at receiving. • Facilitate prompt reporting and quarantine protocols.

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Choosing Pharmacy Procurement Software

Selecting the right pharmacy procurement software is a critical decision that impacts a health system's financial performance, compliance and operational efficiency. A well-chosen pharmacy procurement software should simplify procurement, ensure compliance with vendor and GPO agreements—as an integrated function within your pharmacy enterprise's workflows—and provide visibility into procurement trends. With so many options available, pharmacies must assess features that align with their specific needs, ensuring they invest in a solution that delivers immediate and sustained value and significant return on investment (ROI).

Vendor and Price Comparison

Pharmacy procurement is a complex and ever-changing landscape, with prices changing daily, contracts growing more complex and availability fluctuating in real time. To stay competitive and maximize savings, health systems need a pharmacy procurement system that consolidates data from all vendors and provides a clear, real-time comparison of pricing and compliance impact. Without this capability, organizations risk overpaying for products, missing out on rebates or unintentionally violating procurement agreements.

To consistently find the best procurement options and save more, make sure your health system's pharmacy procurement software:

- Combines all sources into a single interface
  - Primary vendor
  - Secondary and tertiary vendors
  - Manufacturers
  - GPO and buying groups
  - 340B vs. WAC
- Enables purchase order submission for all sources through a single interface
- Finds the best procurement option by automatically comparing multiple variables *before you purchase:*
  - Price
  - Cost of goods sold (COGS)
  - Type
  - Quantity
  - Impact on compliance
  - Package size
  - Potential rebate
  - Cost to change

- Provides real-time product availability
- Shows unit pricing for apples-to-apples comparison
- Uncovers hidden savings (e.g., buying outside the Top 200)
- Confirms item, price, quantity and other product data at receiving

> **" Many times, a drug shortage is no real issue for us. It's as simple as moving that product to another available vendor using this intuitive platform. The item may be on backorder, but we don't feel that pressure."**
>
> - Chris Bayrd, Regional Purchaser at Guardian of Maine

Data-Driven Insights and Reporting

By understanding pharmacy procurement data, health systems can make informed, strategic decisions to maximize cost savings and operational efficiency. A strong pharmacy procurement software doesn't just store procurement data; it also analyzes and clearly visualizes it so that health systems can easily identify trends, assess spending patterns and optimize procurement strategies.

A pharmacy procurement software shouldn't only facilitate transactions but also provide meaningful data insights that drive better procurement decisions. It should also include predictive analytics to identify potential drug shortages before they occur and customizable purchasing filters that allow leadership to guide teams toward pre-approved NDCs, boosting compliance and strategy alignment across all locations. Make sure your solution empowers you with:

- **Real-time access to procurement data isn't optional—it's essential:** Your pharmacy procurement software must update procurement data in real time across all vendor sources, eliminating information silos and allowing for immediate decision-making.

- **Comprehensive dashboards:** The software should feature intuitive, on-hand dashboards that highlight key procurement metrics, cost trends and compliance insights. Pharmacies should be able to quickly assess their financial and operational health without digging through complex reports.

- **Configurable reports and custom analytics:** Beyond a comprehensive set of preset reports, pharmacies should have the ability to create custom analytics tailored to their specific procurement strategies and compliance goals, with the ability to select the right format and frequency based on the user's needs and role.

- **Advanced data visualizations:** A pharmacy procurement software must provide clear, graphical representations of trends, expenditures and performance to support data-driven decision-making (not just show raw data).

- **Predictive intelligence for drug shortages:** Software should help pharmacy teams spot potential shortages before they impact patient care, enabling proactive procurement decisions and vendor shifts without compromising compliance.

> *I have used SureCost at multiple business units for over 20 years. The amount of savings in both time and energy for our teams on a daily basis is immeasurable. SureCost's ability to provide 'vision' into what is truly available has helped us provide medications and solutions to our patients where we would not have been able to. Its ease of use—combined with the power of its flexibility, reporting and clarity of savings opportunities—has made SureCost a must-have for us in all our daily processes. At this point, I can't imagine a day without its help."*

- Mike Irk, President at InnovativeRx/Young

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Integrated Pharmacy Compliance Software

Staying compliant in a highly regulated industry requires more than manual tracking and reactive management. Health systems need an integrated system that ensures compliance with vendor agreements, GPO contracts and DSCSA regulations while proactively identifying potential risks before they become costly issues.

Compliance is about more than just following regulations: It's about ensuring accountability across your procurement network. Your pharmacy procurement software should include the following information from your partners:

Between Primary Vendor

- Compliance metrics (i.e., minimum purchase volume, source compliance ratio, generic spend, included/excluded items, timeframe for reporting discrepancies)
- Rebate tiers plus recommendations to meet higher tiers
- Discrepancies in procurement, pricing, etc.
- Potential impact on compliance when procurement outside primary vendor

From GPO

- Updated real-time GPO pricing on all products
- Compliance with the agreed-upon price (i.e., correct invoices at receiving)
- Automation in pharmacy to confirm GPO price at receiving
- Electronic "paper trail" to correct pricing issues with source

With DSCSA

- Data specifications and electronic storage standards per regulations
  - Package-level T2 product-tracing data
  - EPCIS standard format
  - Retention of six years of data in electronic format
- Protocols to monitor and quarantine suspect items
  - Mandated procedures to check for suspicious packages
  - Ability to immediately quarantine suspicious packages
  - Capability to report suspect packages within 24 hours and respond to audit requests within 48 hours
- Built-in tools for pharmacy procurement software that ensure and streamline DSCSA compliance
  - Automatic match between POs and received products
  - Instant alerts for potential issues with data ready for reconciliation
  - Transfer oversight between locations
  - Mobile capabilities (e.g., scan items using your portable device, capture data wherever teams receive products)

Within Teams

- Unified pharmacy procurement system aligning staff with compliance and strategy through customizable item filters that enforce location-specific NDC selections
- Automated "guardrails" that guide teams to pre-approved products and proactively adjust based on real-time drug shortage forecasts
- Tracking procurement decisions and exceptions with added visibility into item substitutions made in response to predicted supply disruptions
- Tools for internal auditing of purchases that reflect whether teams followed shortage alerts and strategic item filters

Within the Software Platform

- Health systems should evaluate whether the pharmacy procurement platform itself adheres to established data protection standards. SOC 2 compliance confirms that the software provider follows strict protocols for data security, availability and confidentiality—critical for safeguarding procurement, inventory and compliance data across all system integrations.

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> *"Our experience with SureCost has yielded a substantial multi-digit growth improvement in GCR (generic compliance ratio) with our primary vendor and overall savings with our secondary vendors. By embracing a net pricing approach facilitated by SureCost's automated procurement process, we witnessed a shift from gut-driven to data-driven procurement decisions. Conversations with stakeholders transformed from 'Why do we have X number of this on the shelf?' to 'Let's analyze the data.' Integrating SureCost was the best decision we've ever made in the last ten years that I've been with the organization."*

Enhanced Pharmacy Inventory Management

Effective pharmacy inventory management is essential for maintaining optimal stock levels, reducing waste and ensuring medications are available when patients need them. A pharmacy procurement software that integrates procurement with inventory management allows health systems to make proactive, data-driven decisions that prevent overstocking and stockouts.

A comprehensive pharmacy procurement software should integrate inventory management, allowing pharmacies to make informed procurement decisions based on real-time stock levels. Look for features such as:

Pharmacy Physical Inventory
- Conduct inventory via digital scan or file upload and count based on unit or package
- Manage inventory at corporate, regional, departmental and location levels
- Calculate value based on last acquired price or acquisition cost for each source
- Generate monthly, weekly or daily snapshots
- Track and confirm every step of inventory transfers

Pharmacy Perpetual Inventory
- View dynamic inventory reflecting real-time actual usage at any time
- Track entire product lifecycle from PO to dispense or return
- Set min/max values automatically based on usage and days-supply
- Choose from multiple, flexible replenishment methods

Cycle Counts and Reporting
- Analyze variances and stale inventory across all pharmacy locations within the health system
- Use cycle counts to focus on high-impact items
- Assess discrepancies against total inventory
- Identify diversion, potential theft or system issues

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> *The team at SureCost is professional and brings significant value in regards to inventory management best practices. SureCost has increased our efficiencies in procurement, which directly hits the bottom line. The data available and our analysis of this information gives us the ability to make smart decisions regarding inventory control."*

- Steve Boulanger, R.Ph., President at Mercury Pharmacy Services

Integration Into Existing Systems

A pharmacy procurement software solution should enhance and integrate with your pharmacy enterprise's existing workflows. Ensuring seamless compatibility with pharmacy management systems, accounts payable and wholesaler platforms allows for streamlined operations and more accurate financial and inventory tracking.

Make sure any new solution seamlessly integrates with these systems and processes:

- Pharmacy management system
- Accounts payable (including invoice reconciliation)
- Receiving
- Pharmacy automation (e.g., cabinets, Pyxis, etc.)

Given their unique pharmacy procurement workflows, health system pharmacies need solutions that offer multipath support, integrating with providers such as:

- 340B splitters
- EMR/EHR systems
- Wholesaler and manufacturer platforms

Platform Security and Data Integrity

- When integrating with systems such as pharmacy management software, accounts payable, 340B splitters and EMRs, health systems should ensure their pharmacy procurement platform meets rigorous security standards. SOC 2 compliance provides assurance that the software vendor maintains strict controls for data handling, system uptime and confidentiality across all connected environments.

> *Instead of looking at five different vendors' websites, your pharmacy management system and your inventory, with SureCost, you can see everything in one place."*

- Gabriel Toribio, Central Procurement Manager at PharMerica
Read More on How SureCost has Helped PharMerica

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Solution Comparison

SureCost is an all-in-one software-as-a-service (SaaS) solution for pharmacy procurement, pharmacy inventory management and pharmacy compliance. SureCost helps over 1,600 pharmacies across the country save, on average, 2% annually on their COGS. SureCost also reduces their time spent on procurement by half while ensuring primary vendor and GPO compliance.

Here's how SureCost's capabilities align with the above features. You can use this chart to compare SureCost with other providers you're considering.

Feature	SureCost	Provider 1	Provider 2
Integrates procurement, inventory and multiple levels of compliance	✓	✕	✕
Unifies all catalogs and PO submissions into a single interface	✓	✕	✕
Optimizes procurement across all catalogs through automation in pharmacy	✓	✕	✕
Ensures primary vendor assurance	✓	✕	✕
Confirms DSCSA compliance at receiving	✓	✕	✕
Provides enhanced pharmacy physical inventory and pharmacy perpetual inventory	✓	✕	✕
Offers pharmacy procurement mobile capabilities	✓	✕	✕
Integrates with 340B splitters	✓	✕	✕
Optimizes procurement between WAC, GPO, and 340B accounts	✓	✕	✕
Integrates with A/P for invoice reconciliation	✓	✕	✕
Gives teams internal compliance guardrails	✓	✕	✕
Provides leadership with integrated, system-wide procurement analysis	✓	✕	✕
Maintains SOC 2 compliance for data security and system integrity	✓	✕	✕
Predictive tools for drug shortage alerts	✓	✕	✕
Custom NDC filters to drive location-level strategies	✓	✕	✕

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Assessing Your Health System's Needs

Is your health system overpaying for products?
- ⦿ Yes
- ⦿ No
- ⦿ Unsure

How much savings is your pharmacy missing out on?
- ⦿ A lot
- ⦿ Some
- ⦿ Minimal
- ⦿ Unsure

Do you worry your pharmacy is not compliant with all vendor agreements?
- ⦿ Yes
- ⦿ No
- ⦿ Unsure

On a weekly basis, how much time is your pharmacy team spending on administrative procurement tasks (e.g., comparing catalogs, uploading POs, tracking rebates, finding alternates)?
- ⦿ Less than 1 hour
- ⦿ 1–2 hours
- ⦿ 2–4 hours
- ⦿ 4 or more hours

How often does your pharmacy have to scramble due to unexpected-out-of-stocks or other supply issues?
- ⦿ Far too often
- ⦿ Frequently
- ⦿ Occasionally
- ⦿ Never
- ⦿ Unsure

Are you or your staff losing time or feeling stressed due to inefficient processes or simply not having enough hours in the day?
- ⦿ Yes
- ⦿ No
- ⦿ Unsure

If your answers suggest missed savings, recurring inefficiencies or uncertainty around compliance, now's the time to re-evaluate your pharmacy procurement strategy. Let's talk about how SureCost can help.

Selecting the right pharmacy procurement software is critical to maintaining financial sustainability, operational efficiency and regulatory compliance. The ideal pharmacy procurement software should integrate seamlessly with inventory management and compliance tracking while providing advanced automation and insightful reporting.

SureCost is designed to meet these needs, empowering health systems to save on COGS, reduce time spent on procurement and ensure compliance with vendor agreements and DSCSA regulations. If your health system struggles with high drug costs, staff shortages or compliance challenges, now is the time to explore how SureCost can transform your procurement strategy.

Learn More in a Demo

SureCost