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Machine that dispenses prescriptions to be trialled

A machine that dispenses prescriptions is to go on trial, it has been reported.

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The dispenser is to be tested in five hospitals, the **Daily Mail** claimed.

However, the manufacturer behind them would like to see machines on high street – a prospect that may frighten independent pharmacies.

The machines would be able to dispense drugs at any time of the day or night. They come in two models, the paper reported, one holding 330 packs of medicine and the other 2,000.

Users insert their prescription into the machine and pick up a telephone to access a live video link to a registered pharmacist.

The pharmacist will check the prescription and ensure those who have to pay have done so before allowing the machine to dispense the drugs.

The dispenser, which costs around £50,000 and is called a MedCentre, has been developed by the Canadian firm PharmaTrust and is on trial in Canada.

A trial is due to start in Britain soon.

PharmaTrust would not say which hospitals were taking part in the trial.

Peter Ellis of the company told the **Daily Mail**: "We believe the MedCentre is simple to use and has benefits for patients across the UK.

"The purpose of these trials is to assess patients' use of the technology."

However, a spokesman for the National Pharmacy Association told the paper: "It could never be an adequate substitute for your local community pharmacy, where a range of services are available beyond dispensing, such as health checks, medicine reviews and lifestyle interventions."