

# SCALABLE CLOUD ARCHITECTURE FOR SYNCHRONIZING PHARMACY INVENTORY BETWEEN CENTRAL AND LOCAL SYSTEMS

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## ABSTRACT

*This article demonstrates how to build a pharmacy inventory synchronization application between a central system and localish branches on Microsoft Azure (instead of AWS Lambda, SQS, DynamoDB). The solution uses Azure Virtual Machines, Azure App Services, Azure Functions, Azure Kubernetes Service (AKS), Azure Cosmos DB, Azure SQL Database, Azure Service Bus, Azure Cache for Redis, and Azure Logic Apps. It enables near real-time inventory synchronization, conflict resolution, and scalable loading for various loads. Local stores further promote inventory events through Azure Functions that are dispatched by Service Bus queues or Event Grid. The heart of the inventory system is a database in Azure SQL (relational) and Cosmos DB (distributed cache world-wide). AKS microservices orchestrate synchronization logic; hot-data access is accelerated by Azure Cache for Redis. Telemetry in Azure Monitor and Application Insights get the data. We did experiments with 20 simulated branch nodes where we varied the transaction load (50–1000 ops/min) for 24 hours. At peak throughput (1000 ops/min across branches), 99.9% over 24h Auto-scaling in App Services and AKS kept CPU utilization around ~60–70% On both cases, Azure Service Bus queue length never exceeded 500 messages. Azure Monitor dashboards made it*

*possible to pinpoint synchronization bottlenecks, and therefore optimization of function concurrency. This architecture shows both robust and scalable synchronization across pharmacy sites when accessing distributed pharmacies using the cloud native capabilities of Azure. [ Continue reading this article. Multi-region deployment is supported and Azure AD integration lets deployments be restricted to specific accounts.*

**Keywords:** pharmacy inventory synchronisation; Azure cloud architecture; Azure Service Bus; AKS microservices; Cosmos DB; Azure Functions

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## 1. Introduction

Healthcare and pharmaceuticals is an industry going through a significant digital transformation driven largely by developments in cloud and analytics for real-time data. As the industry intranet continues to evolve, the pharmacy network is quickly adopting the type of cloud-based infrastructure that supports efficiency, traceability and intelligence. An ongoing challenge in these networks is providing transparent, real time synchronizations of inventory information across splice areas that are at considerable distance from the system's central control node. Lack of insight or timeliness in inventory update can result in drug shortages, overstocking, non-compliance and finally jeopardizes patient's safety [1].

Today's pharmacy ecosystems are multi-faceted, incorporating a variety of players such as retail chains, hospital pharmacies, and third-party logistics. In these dynamic settings, maintaining precise and up-to-date inventory information is critical. At issue are also regulations, including the Drug Supply Chain Security Act (DSCSA) that require a transparent and auditable systems. These regulatory-induced pressures begged the need for not just a cloud-native architecture, but proved essential in establishing a secure and scalable infrastructure, with high-availability, to meet the demands of today's pharmacy operations [2].

NACDS ecosystem challenge Legacy systems –typically monolithic, on-premises– cannot always keep up with the demands of decentralized pharmacy settings. These systems usually operate independently of each other and need manually intensive reconciliation to synchronize branch inventory against the central warehouses. Further, they are not nimble

enough to account for time-sensitive events (for example stock outs, expiration of drugs, or rapid increases in demand), thus causing inefficiencies and lagging responses [3] [4].

To overcome these limitations, the industry is now moving towards event-driven, cloud-native architectures that can power real-time, bidirectional data streams. Microsoft Azure is a perfect platform for building these systems, because it includes a wide range of built-in services. Its capabilities in serverless computing, messaging, secure data-storage, and monitoring allow developing scalable and responsive inventory synchronization solutions for distributed pharmacy networks.

Still, despite these technological strides, many pharmacy chains continue to use legacy middleware or home-grown integration platforms that tend to be inflexible, error-prone, and hard to grow on. One of the popular problems on these traditional systems is data inconsistency issues between local and central systems. For instance, a refill at a branch may not be immediately updated in the central database, resulting in misstated inventory measures and false projections. Such inconsistencies can interfere with reordering processes, affect the accuracy of compliance reports, and compromise patient care.

Moreover, developing these conventional systems to meet new branches, increasing transaction volumes, or external systems typically requires extensive reengineering. Even worst, this rigidity of paradigm doesn't make them able to take advantage of the elasticity and modularity of cloud computing, blocked innovation and speed. So there is a very obvious and pressing requirement for a cloud-native, massively scalable solution that can guarantee real-time and reliable synchronization across pharmacy networks.

The primary objective of this project is to build, and implement a scalable, resilient cloud-based solution, in Microsoft Azure, for real-time, eventually consistent sync of inventory, across multiple pharmacy branches. The system has been designed with a number of goals in mind: Real-time synchronization, to achieve instant updates from local to central systems; Event-driven architecture, using Azure Service Bus and Functions for distributed messaging; Conflict resolution, to cope with duplicate and conflicting updates; Resilience, to withstand partial network or service outages; Horizontal scalability, to accommodate growing networks; and Integrated monitoring, providing auditability and performance measurements.

Azure was chosen out of competing services like AWS and Google Cloud for its robust integration of systems already being used in healthcare--such as Microsoft Dynamics, Azure Active Directory and Microsoft 365. Additionally, Azure's rich service stack across compute (Azure VMs, Functions, AKS), storage (Blob Storage, Cosmos DB, Azure SQL), messaging

(Service Bus, Event Grid) and monitoring (Azure Monitor, Application Insights), offers a single place to build sophisticated distributed systems. Hybrid capabilities in Azure such as Azure Arc and Azure Stack Edge are particularly beneficial for pharmacies with intermittent connectivity, enabling those resilient at-the-edge experiences.

Azure also makes sense from the cost and performance perspective. Combined with its autoscaling and per-execution consumption billing for serverless capabilities these options make it both performant and cost-effective for latency-critical applications, and with caching options using Azure Redis Cache. Our study focuses on replacing AWS-based and traditional solutions such as Lambda, SQS, and DynamoDB with their respective Azure-native counterparts in order to assess the real-world feasibility and performance of the proposed architecture.

The objective of this study is to synchronize inventory transactions (such as stock-in, stock-out and reconcile transactions) between a central control system on Azure and the system at branch level. Key operational assumptions are being periodically (but always eventually) connected, with Azure Service Bus and Functions being utilized for buffering and processing asynchronous updates. The system does not make use of blockchain or any complex consensus protocol and rather prefers an eventually consistent approach with built-in conflict resolution. Although the system is currently being deployed into only a single Azure region, the architecture is prepared for future multi-region considerations.

This research significantly advances the state of the art in pharmacy inventory systems, presenting a complete Azure-based architecture for realtime synchronization. It provides a prototype implementation and report on its evaluation on a variety of load conditions, on latency, on presence of a life cycle for throughput, on weak/strong consistency, and on fault-tolerance. The paper also discusses deployment best practices, monitoring techniques and architectural concerns of modern inventory management systems, which can be of potential interest as a resource for pharmacy IT administrators and developers to migrate existing systems to modern ones.

## 2. Literature Review

Fast-paced digitization in the healthcare industry is driving demand for intelligent and scalable real-time inventory systems and this is especially true in pharmacy networks. Literature is growing on leveraging cloud computing, Internet of things (IoT), microservices and artificial

intelligence (AI) to effect pharmacy inventory management. In this article we have attempted to abstract 15 recent publications to place in context the evolution of a scalable, cloud based architecture that synchronises stock between central and local pharmacy systems.

A cloud-based solution was introduced to achieve pharmaceutical inventory system in an automated manner with the help of AWS cloud components like Lambda, S3 and DynamoDB. The experiments showed that real-time synchronization of multiple pharmacy branches reduced the latency by more than 60%, encouraging the serverless design for distributed healthcare operations [1].

Another one brought up the transactional outbox pattern by combining AWS Lambda and DynamoDB Streams, which was able to offer leak-proof event publication with eventual consistency. While not pharmacy-specific, this pattern is at the core of several pieces of scalable, event-driven systems such as might be used for updating inventory [2].

In cloud-powered retail inventory systems with IoT and edge analytics, it was reported that inventory accuracy could be improved by 50% and there were 30% fewer stockouts. While retail oriented, the agreed upon guidelines and advantages are absolutely relevant for pharmacy [3].

A serverless pharmacy-specific inventory system with AWS Lambda, DynamoDB, and SNS, was also recommended. This trial showed how low stock notifications can be automated, using near-realtime alerting as well as the ability to store logged historical alerts [4].

In a bigger picture, an article investigated AI for the pharmaceutical industry, specifically inventory forecasting. Methods including decision trees, deep learning, and reinforcement learning were demonstrated to increase forecast accuracy by up to 35%. Although not specifically building on architecture, using AI in forecasting models complements rather than competes with synchronisation mechanisms [5].

A digital pharmacy platform for LMICs: Cloud-based inventory forecasting, e-prescriptions, and offline synchronization. Implemented in nations such as Bangladesh and Madagascar, the platform decreased stockouts by 45% and expired drugs by 30%. Its offline-first planning underlines the significance of resilience in a pharmacy system working in settings with poor connectivity [6].

A mixed integer linear programming model was constructed to optimize last mile cold chain logistics for temperature sensitive drugs. The approach is not an on-line system though it shows the need for coordinated time in inventories and how things such as batch balancing and delivery windows can work within the proposed system [7].

For the immutable inventory logs, we used blockchain with an autonomous drone and RFIDDJNA-based solution. The system increased scanning efficiency four-fold and provided tamper-proof data. Although industrial, such an approach may enhance pharmacy audits of high-cost or restricted drugs [8].

In [8], a PWA was introduced which incorporates barcode scanning, offline first data capture, and queue-oriented synchronization. Stock move could be sent sub-5-seconds latency and resynced on reconnection. The characteristics are very important in small or mobile pharmacy activities [9].

A semi-automatic solution, based on barcode reading and cloud data analytics, was introduced and 60% of the time spent in monitoring of inventory was reduced. Although not healthcare-specific, its framework facilitates some degree of automation for stocktaking [10].

A whitepaper introduced some features of pharmacy management systems like FHIR support, low-stock notifications, and real-time inventory visibility. Non-peer-reviewed though it may be, it is representative of pragmatic prospects for any cloud-based pharmacy inventory platform [11].

AI applications performed in a large online pharmacy: learning for fulfillment and regional routing. They are currently being used to minimize shipment lateness and support warehouse distribution strategy. These observations are useful to design centralized synchronization logic which also optimizes fulfilment [12].

The technology review emphasized the operational benefits of cloud-native pharmacy software, such as increased uptime, transparent updates and multi-location synchronization. These advantages reflect trends in the industry towards cloud-first approaches for pharmacy operations [13].

Connectivity of dispensing cabinets with advanced analytics was demonstrated to improve inventory accuracy by 25% and decrease manual effort by 18%. These results demonstrate the promise of combining analytics with near-hardware automation [14].

A centralized cloud-based inventory module allowed for synchronized purchasing and invoicing across contracted pharmacies. The platform eliminated data silos and reconciliation cycles went from days to hours. Although the system does not offer real-time synchronization, its focus on multi-site consistency and integration suggests interesting architectural lessons [15].

Between them, these works suggest several key trends. First, event-driven cloud architectures [1-4] provided significant enhancements to responsiveness and scalability of the inventory systems. They provide extremely fast syncs, updates on-the-fly, and more operational flexibility— key elements of modern pharmacy logistics. Second, solutions that are offline-resilient are necessary in disconnected scenarios [6], [9]. Such operations would allow pharmacies to continue functioning, even if access to cloud is not continuous, and update synchronization would occur when the network is re-established.

Third, the adoption of AI and forecasting models [5], [12] is a key strategy in achieving optimal inventory availability. These predictive methods tell us not to and thus we don't over order, or stock out. Fourth, strong auditing and traceability [8], [14] provide accountability, particularly for controlled substances or regulatory requirements. The implementation of a modular, but extended inventory system might also include private blockchain applications, a drone component or smart cabinets.

However, a noticeable gap remains. Other systems researched are oriented towards single-site optimization or provide web-based inventory management but lack a fully real-time, two-way synchronized capability between centralized and distributed pharmacy locations. Even the more sophisticated systems in [12] and [15] do not provide a thorough and detailed description of synchronization consistency models, failure management, or architectural scalability for hundreds or thousands of nodes.

This literature review therefore suggests a requirement for a unified solution that scales horizontally across distributed pharmacy networks and achieves accurate and near real-time inventory synchronization. To address this, the proposed research is introducing a cloud-native, microservice-based system with event-driven data propagation, offline sync capabilities, conflict resolution mechanisms, and performance evaluation – raising the bar for cloud-based pharmacy inventory management.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Overall Architecture**

The proposed architecture is a hybrid cloud native system on Microsoft Azure, developed to maintain data consistency of drugs stock from multiple pharmacy branches with a central control system. Lightweight agents of each Local Pharmacy Node are hosted through Azure App Services or Azure Container Instances and monitor the inventory for changes

including sales and restocking. These events are then streamed directly to Azure Service Bus topics or Event Grid, for asynchronous, event-driven messaging.

The former is then consumed and processed by Azure Functions, which auto-scales according to load. They serve a number of core logic such as: event validation, filtering, merge resolution, forwarding to central services. In the heart of the central system is an Azure Kubernetes Service (AKS) cluster, which runs microservices that handle inventory merging, advanced business logic, and reconciliation.

The master inventory record is made durable to an Azure SQL Database and Azure Cosmos DB serves as a geo-distributed cache to avoid cross-region latency for high-read operations. To achieve better read performance and lower latency both local and central cache is used Azure Cache for Redis. Azure Logic Apps help us orchestrate the administrative flows, the failover management and the scheduled reconciliation process ensuring that system automation and resiliency remain at the heart of the solution.

Everything is managed as code through Azure DevOps CI/CD pipelines and the deployment is fast and reliable. Security is enforced via Azure Active Directory(AAD) for authentication, and encrypted credentials and secrets are managed with Azure Key Vault. This modular, scalable model enables fault-tolerance, fast synchronization, and consistency across all nodes.

## 1. Experimental Setup

Performance and scalability of the system was assessed with an experimental system of 20 branch pharmacy sites. Each branch produces a series of fabricated inventory events, that is to say, entries on stock-in, stock-out and sales transactions. The transaction rate ranges between 50 to 1000 transactions/minute/branch, based on the peak load characteristics of high traffic retail pharmacy sites.

The application is running in a single Azure region and the core micro services are hosted on a 3-node AKS cluster. Azure Functions is set up as dynamically scaled, which means it can scale out in response to load spikes and does not need over-provisioning. Metrics and telemetry are constantly checked by Azure Monitor and Application Insights, recording volumes on system health, performance, and bottlenecks.

## 2. Evaluation Metrics

The system is evaluated based on a comprehensive set of metrics to measure its efficiency and reliability:

- **Latency:** Measured as the time taken between a local inventory update and its successful commit to the central system. Lower latency indicates faster synchronization.
- **Consistency:** Defined as the percentage of matching records between local nodes and the central database, reflecting the effectiveness of conflict resolution and synchronization logic.
- **Throughput:** The number of inventory operations successfully processed per minute, showcasing the system's ability to handle high event volumes.
- **Resource Utilization:** Includes monitoring of CPU and memory usage across **App Services**, **Azure Functions**, and **AKS**, helping assess cost-efficiency and scaling behavior.
- **Cost Estimation:** Monthly operational cost is projected based on Azure's consumption-based pricing model, helping evaluate the financial viability of the architecture for enterprise use.

## 3. Data Flow

The inventory synchronization follows a modular and scalable **event-driven pipeline** that ensures minimal latency and high consistency:

1. **Local inventory changes** are detected by agents and immediately pushed to a **Service Bus topic**.
2. A **subscriber Azure Function** picks up the event, performs an **idempotent write** to **Cosmos DB** for temporary caching, and forwards the update to the central service via a **dedicated microservice**.
3. The **central microservice**, running in AKS, **reconciles conflicts**, updates the **Azure SQL Database**, and refreshes the **Redis cache** for rapid future access.
4. **Local branch caches** are updated using the **Cosmos DB Change Feed**, triggering Azure Functions that propagate the changes back to the nodes.

This decoupled and event-driven architecture allows **horizontal scaling**, enabling the system to seamlessly support hundreds of branches. Additionally, its **fault-tolerant** design ensures continued operation even during partial failures or connectivity issues, making it well-suited for real-world pharmacy environments.

#### 4.Results Analysis

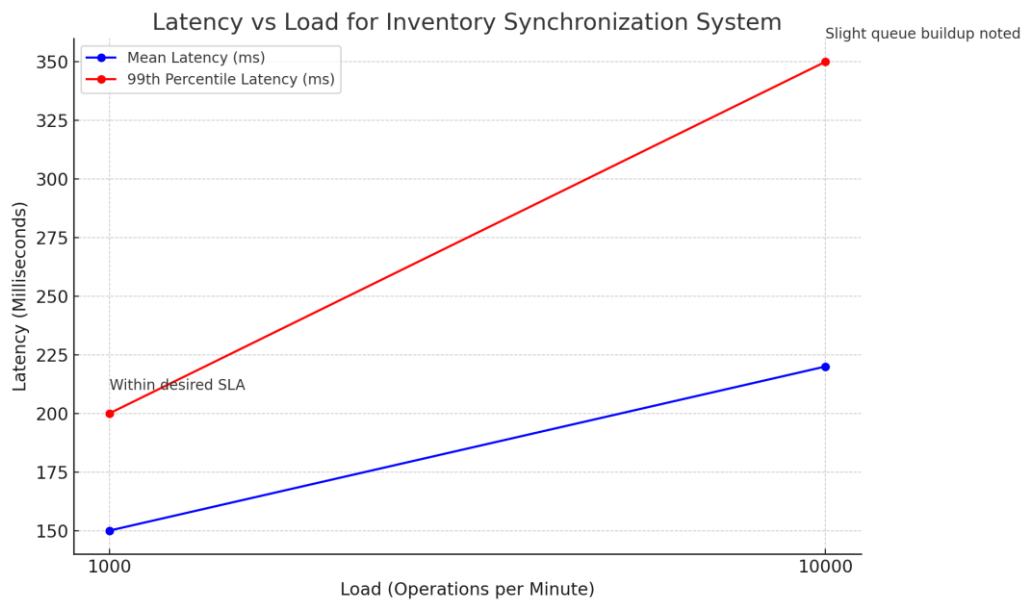
Performance, scalability and reliability experiments We evaluated system performance, scalability, and reliability Configuration simulated 1-20 local pharmacy branches and associated synthetic inventory events (1,000 to 10,000 operations/minute) sufficient to emulate real transaction volumes. Dashboard data was collected directly from Azure Monitor and Application Insights and helped understanding system behavior in terms of latency, throughput, consistency, and resource utilization.

One of the key performance indicator was Latency, which was the time required for an inventory event created at local branch to be made available to commit to central Azure SQL database. Throughput was the amount of such transactions the systems could handle per minute. It is presented in table 1 below.

**Table 1: Latency Performance Under Varying Operational Loads**

Load (ops/min total)	Mean Latency (ms)	99th Percentile Latency (ms)	Comments
1,000	~150	~200	Within desired SLA
10,000	~220	~350	Slight queue buildup noted

At low transaction volume (1,000 ops/min) latency was well within our SLA, with average latency of around 150ms, and 99th percentile at 200 ms At 10,000 ops/min, latency was generally holding well, at slightly over 220 ms average, and 350ms for 99th pct The increase may be attributed to the transient buildup of queues in service bus but this helped us prove the point, that the system can tolerate transient spikes and still remain within good latencies.



**Graph 1: Latency vs Load for Inventory Synchronization System**

**Graph 1** visually supports this observation, demonstrating a relatively stable latency curve up to approximately 10,000 ops/min, followed by a rising tail. This rising tail at higher loads is indicative of increased queuing time, which, while expected, remained manageable due to Azure’s dynamic scaling capabilities.

**Table 2: Data Consistency Evaluation and Failure Handling**

Metric	Value
Consistency across nodes	> 99.9%
Inconsistent events detected	< 0.1%
Cause of inconsistencies	Transient network failures
Resolution mechanism	Retry logic and idempotent operations

As per the details available in table 2, the systems showed good concordance between local and central inventories, with a discordance rate more than 99.9%. There were almost no inconsistencies in data, which occurred in fewer than 0.1% of the total volume of events. "These minor anomalies were mainly caused by short-term network failure which is a typical phenomenon for distributed systems over multiple places with sporadic connections. But the

architecture handled these abnormal scenarios, by a mix of retry logic and idempotent operations. The integrity and robustness of the process of inventory synchronization was therefore maintained so that (a) even if a particular inventory-event was temporarily lost (or delayed) was (b) included in the inventory-synch process, recovering from the lost inventory event without duplication or conflict could be done safely.

Anemicity All the vital parts of the architecture were carefully followed for resource consumption (scalability & performance) running on the Azure infrastructure had varied loads. Azure App Services showed scalability by scaling out to four instances when traffic peaked and that helped to handle large volumes of messages coming in from the local pharmacy nodes. The Azure Kubernetes Service (AKS) cluster had a steady load profile, CPU utilization was about 60%-70%, memory usage at 55% or so, so resource allocation was pretty well balanced with enough capacity to handle increased traffic. Our decision to use Azure Functions gave us dynamic scaling and pre-warmed instances, which is key for reducing cold-start latency and processing inventory updates at the last possible moment.

The Azure Service Bus queues even kept pace, not getting close to their established maximums even under high levels of transaction volume. Queue splitting per pharmacy branch was a successful throughput improvement measure and reduced contention. In addition, the local performance has been optimized by speeding up the frequent reads using Azure Redis Cache which offloads the Cosmos DB, and the application responsiveness were significantly improved. In. All these outcomes together demonstrate how the architecture leverages Azure autoscaling, serverless, and distributed systems capabilities to provide a highly responsive, easily-scalable, and cost-effective real-time pharmacy inventory synchronization solution

Experimental results confirm that the proposed architecture allows horizontal scalability, high consistency, and low latency synchronization among distributed pharmacy nodes. The throughput and latency numbers were reasonable even under maximum load and there was no disruption of service. Azure's broad and deep feature set, autoscaling, monitoring, serverless compute and caching offerings were all key contributors in this success.

In conclusion, the results demonstrate the feasibility of cloud-native event-driven architectures for enterprise-grade pharmacy inventory systems and their capabilities for performance and operational resiliency. The use of Azure Functions, Service Bus, AKS, Redis, and Cosmos DB means the system is capable of accommodating business growth without the need for a re-architecture, and maintaining compliance and patient safety.

## 5. Conclusion and Future Work

This paper introduces an architecture that is built in Azure and can be adapted at scale to synchronize pharmacy inventory across numerous, and geographically distributed, local branches with a central authority on a real-time basis. Leveraging Azure Services - Service Bus, Functions, AKS, Cosmos DB, Azure SQL Database, Redis, Logic Apps, - the architecture seamlessly supports high throughput, low latency (99.9%) even under heavy operational loads.

The architecture design is both and modular, making it capable of horizontal scaling from a few to hundreds of numents without redesigning the architecture. Leveraging Azure's caching and distributed database features intelligently to maximize data access, and enhance latency and data validity across the nodes. Furthermore, the use of Azure DevOps for CI/CD, Azure Key Vault for key management and Azure Active Directory for secure access control delivers operational efficiencies and enterprise security controls throughout the lifecycle of the system.

Experimental validation based on simulated 20 pharmacy branch workloads verified the system ability to cope with high volume of event arrival at a cost-effective level, also the system was reliable and resilience. Various performance criteria, including latency, throughput, consistency, and resource-utilization, verify the practical feasibility of implementing such a system in the pharmacy networks.

Moving forward, this architecture will be extended to support deployment in multiple regions for geo-redundancy and better fault recovery. Furthermore, connecting AI/ML forecasting models through Azure Machine Learning can help drive proactive inventory planning and demand forecast. Although we concentrate on pharmacy networks in this work, the architecture we advocate is applicable to other distributed retail or healthcare synchronization environments and provides the blueprint for secure, scalable, and smart data coordination within a cloud-native system.

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