

+NEWS | Today's the day to celebrate pharmacists

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Friday 25 September 2020, 01:58 PM



Dunedin City Pharmacy pharmacy assistant Aelyth Harrison with the International Society of Pharmacovigilance COVID-19 infographic

Today is World Pharmacists Day and the International Society of Pharmacovigilance, the Ministry of Health and Pharmac are giving pharmacists kudos for the important role they play in protecting patients from medicines harm and serving their communities.

The society (ISoP) is a global, not-for-profit professional organisation with over 800 members worldwide, but its president, former director of the Intensive Medicines Monitoring Programme Mira Harrison-Woolrych, is based here in New Zealand.

Dr Harrison-Woolrych says medicinal products, including vaccines, medical devices and herbal products, all carry some risk and pharmacists play a key role in facilitating their safe use.

The pharmacist's role in pharmacovigilance includes dispensing checks, picking up potential medicines interactions, providing expert advice on safe use of medicines, counselling about side effects and teaching and promoting best practices for medicines use.

She adds pharmacists are increasingly applying these skills in a wider range of clinical situations, including hospitals, GP clinics, resthomes and aged care facilities.

“ISoP acknowledges the many ways in which pharmacists contribute to transforming global health through enabling the safe use of medicines,” Dr Harrison-Woolrych says.

Free poster



During the global COVID-19 pandemic with so much “fake news” about medicines circulating, she says it is more important than ever that medicines are used appropriately.

To help with this, ISoP members have developed an infographic poster for patients which pharmacies can download for free and display.

The poster is intended to facilitate conversations with patients about medicines safety, and includes information on the importance of getting medicines and medicines information from trusted sources, and a reminder to take medicines as directed and report any side effects.

Sidenotes

ISoP COVID-19 free infographic poster

Download

669.9 KB

Call for pharmacists to do more

Meanwhile, the Pharmaceutical Society is calling for greater use of the pharmacy workforce.

In a media release, the society says the kinds of healthcare services pharmacists could provide would make a big difference to improving healthcare in New Zealand.

Both doctors and pharmacists highlighted many healthcare services where pharmacists could be taking a wider role, including vaccinations, warfarin management, gout management, throat swabbing for prevention of rheumatic fever, and national health screening programmes (eg, blood pressure and blood glucose checks) run through community pharmacy.

However, medication reviews for patients with long-term conditions was the pharmacist healthcare service that doctors and pharmacists agreed would make the biggest difference to healthcare in the community, and requires more funding.

According to Andrew Miller, a GP from Northland, “There is a much wider role pharmacists could take in terms of long-term condition management. For instance, undertaking medicine reconciliation. Pharmacists are already doing this, but they are not empowered to do this for enough patients because of a lack of funding.”

Ministry of Health and Pharmac congratulate pharmacists

The Ministry of Health and Pharmac have also released statements congratulating pharmacists for the hard work they do.

Pharmac chief executive Sarah Fitt says pharmacists have put in an extraordinary effort during the pandemic this year.

“It feels appropriate as we mark World Pharmacists Day 2020 to acknowledge vital work our community and hospital pharmacists do to serve their communities so well, despite the challenges COVID-19 continues to bring,” says Ms Fitt.

Andi Shirtcliffe, the Ministry of Health’s clinical chief advisor pharmacy, says pharmacists have done a stellar job this year despite massive changes.

“New Zealand’s pharmacists, technicians and their teams have gone above and beyond to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and care for those impacted by it, as well as continuing to cater to the ongoing daily medicines-related needs of New Zealanders.”

World Pharmacists Day is an internationally recognised day to celebrate and raise awareness of the pharmacy profession. It was created by the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) and is held every year on 25 September.