



ADVISORY

ADVISORY TO PROTECT/ SUPPORT PHARMACISTS ON THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) FRONTLINE.

Date: 16th April, 2020.

Target Audience:

- Provincial Health Departments;
- Public and Private Hospitals;
- Pharmacies;
- Pharmacists Associations; and
- Other institutions where Pharmacists are working.

Purpose:

The purpose of this advisory is to provide necessary guidance to aforementioned institutions/stakeholders in order to protect and support Pharmacists and their teams as a key partner in this national health crisis so that people can continue to count on pharmacists in the weeks and months to come. Pharmacists across Pakistan have major role in the delivery of services such as counselling of patients, patient safety, adverse drug reactions reporting and manufacturing, distribution, storage, dispensing and provision of therapeutic goods. Therefore, through this advisory Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) intends that all stakeholders must recognize Pharmacist as an integral part of their healthcare team and support them in the times of COVID-19 pandemic.

Background:

The valuable service that pharmacists and their teams provide to communities, and their important contribution to easing the enormous strain being placed on our country health systems during this coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic, is now clearer than ever. Across Pakistan, Pharmacists are making sure that patients, particularly the vulnerable, receive their medicines despite the quarantines and lockdowns. They are continuing to ensure a robust and efficient medicines and medical product supply chain, in some cases compounding hand sanitizers themselves to relieve shortages. Healthcare facilities across the country are challenged with caring for COVID-19 patients, therefore pharmacies becomes an even more vital access point for surgical masks, N95 masks, sanitizers, medicines and healthcare advice.

Measures to be taken by Stakeholders :-

Division of Pharmacy Services, Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan advise all the aforementioned stakeholders to take following measures to support Pharmacists and their team in order to ensure the continuity of pharmaceutical care to people across Pakistan, so that Pharmacists can play an even greater part in the fight against COVID-19:

1. Pharmacists and their team must be recognized as keyworkers by fully including them in emergency protocols, affording them freedom of movement during lockdowns.
2. It must be ensured that Pharmacists and their team have access to appropriate protective equipment, according to guidelines of International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP), the Hague, Netherlands and in compliance with World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations.
3. Pharmacists and their team should be included in the groups of healthcare and essential workers who are to be tested for coronavirus/COVID-19.
4. Those medicines that are at risk of shortage may be identified and a mitigation plans may be put in place, such as authorising pharmacists to conduct therapeutic substitution through verbal, telephonic or written consultation with the prescriber.





5. Since most of the higher risk groups such as old patients, patients with non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and hypertension and patient with immune compromising diseases are advised to stay home; pharmacists and their team may be provided logistical and financial support for home delivery of their medicines.
6. Provision of such medicines by community pharmacies may be allowed which are normally supplied to outpatients by hospital pharmacies to avoid patients having to travel to hospitals and putting further pressure on hospital pharmacy services.
7. Pharmacists and their team may be allowed to conduct routine pharmacy tasks remotely as necessary, including through telepharmacy consultations.
8. Provincial Governments and other employers may ensure that pharmacists are getting adequate breaks during their shifts, and time off between shifts, in order to be able to carry on providing pharmaceutical care.
9. Wider announcements may be issued to encourage redeployment of capable and able pharmacists and pharmacy technicians to the front line to help with the current demand placed on pharmacies at this time.
10. Student pharmacists and internees are an important contributor to the healthcare team and, where possible, may be utilised to contribute to patient care.
11. Appropriate services may be put in place to support the psychological health of pharmacists and their team. World has already witnessed pharmacist deaths related to coronavirus/COVID-19. Many pharmacists might have served those patients who have later died because of the infection.
12. Financial aid may be provided to pharmacists in the event of temporary closure of pharmacy, hospitals, and pharmaceutical companies for health reasons.
13. National and Regional Pharmacist Associations may engage all members of the pharmaceutical workforce, across community and education; across supply to the support workforce; across industry and hospital; to respond comprehensively to the COVID-19 pandemic, and in solidarity.

Reference:

1. FIP CALL TO ACTION to support pharmacists and pharmacy workers on the coronavirus/COVID-19 frontline.
<https://www.fip.org/files/content/publications/2020/FIP-call-to-action-to-support-pharmacists-and-pharmacy-workers-on-the-coronavirus-COVID-19-frontline.pdf>

