

Tēnā koe

Pharmacy Council is aware of the enormous pressure that pharmacists are under across all health care settings as part of New Zealand's response to the global COVID-19 pandemic. We recognise the work the profession is doing, to ensure that they can provide the best possible care to their patients and also help to protect the public during this challenging time.

Council's primary responsibility is to ensure public safety and in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak this includes ensuring pharmacists can continue to provide health services. We know that there are concerns at the 'coal face' that you do not have access to the same level of support, access to protective equipment and advice relating to COVID-19 as other primary health care professionals and are not seen as frontline staff. Council is anxious to see this corrected, particularly in light of the announcement that access to pharmacies and supermarkets will be maintained, even in a lock-down (COVID-19 category 4) scenario. We are working closely with the Ministry of Health, Pharmaceutical Society, Pharmacy Guild, Central Tas, and others to assist with the COVID-19 pandemic response.

Here are some key immediate messages / actions we hope are useful to help you:

- 1. Protecting Yourself** –We know that most of you are experiencing unprecedented demands on your skills and time. As health professionals your first concern will be the care of your patients; however, Council asks that you ensure you do not place yourself or your pharmacy teams in danger to treat any patient in an emergency or pandemic situation. Council has prepared a short summary and a helpful [link](#) which it encourages you to access and use to talk with your teams and peers.
- 2. Continuing to offer pharmacy services - You should not risk exposure to COVID-19 when providing care to patients.** We are aware that there is a shortage of protective equipment for pharmacists practising in the community. Your sector organisations have raised this concern with the Ministry and are currently escalating the need for protective equipment to be made accessible for you. Follow advice provided by the Ministry, your District Health Board, and your professional organisations about distancing and placing physical barriers between you and your patients. We are now encouraging you to consider practice and delivery options that reduce the risk to you and your teams. Utilise telehealth mechanisms where possible to avoid physical contact with patients. Prescribers are being advised to utilise fax and NZePS wherever possible in preference to face to face patient consultations. The provision of services requiring physical contact such as CPAMs should be discussed with your DHB portfolio manager. We are working on mechanisms to reduce your administrative burden and these will be communicated as they are enabled.
- 3. Compilation of list of pharmacists with additional capacity to assist** – Council has had offers of assistance from pharmacists currently locuming or with spare capacity, keen to help wherever needed during the pandemic period. We are compiling a list of pharmacists with a current APC who are willing to assist during this period of increased workload. We will then co-ordinate the supply and demand for additional pharmacist workforce at either a DHB or regional level. If you hold a current APC and would like to offer your services please contact us as soon as possible with your name, Council registration number, dates or periods of availability and the region/s in which you are available for work, to this email: COVID-19@pharmacycouncil.org.nz .

4. **Pharmacists who have previously held an APC** – We would like to call upon New Zealand registered pharmacists who are no longer practising (and are on the non-practising register), or have left the register and may be able to help either at the front line, in a supporting role or, if applicable on a Ministry initiative (e.g. Healthline or contact tracing) . Please indicate your interest in assisting ASAP by sending an email to COVID-19@pharmacycouncil.org.nz. If you know anyone in this category, we would really appreciate you forwarding this email to them.
5. **Important Technical Guidance** – Pharmaceutical Society is working hard to provide you with the most up to date guidance, along with the Ministry of Health. Refer [\[HERE\]](#)
6. **APC On-line registration** – You will be aware the Annual Practising Certificate Renewal Process is underway, many of you have already completed it. For those who haven't, our preference would be that you do it ASAP. Additional information on the APC online process can be found [\[HERE\]](#). **HOWEVER, at a minimum, even if you have not completed all your professional development or more likely, not had time to record it, please make sure you apply before 1 April and declare that you are not yet fully compliant with recertification requirements.** We do understand that you may have left recording your professional development until the “11th hour”, however, getting your application in before your current APC expires will enable you to continue practising, as you will be deemed to hold a practising certificate. (Late applications are NOT processed automatically, and you would need to cease practising legally until we issued your APC). We want you all to be able to continue practising and will have processes in place to work with you to relieve additional pressures where necessary.
7. **Justified variations in practice** – Pharmacy Council, of course, expects you to continue to apply the key principles of professional practice including the need to work cooperatively with colleagues to keep people safe, to practise in line with the best available evidence and to recognise and work within the limits of your competence. However, we also recognise that in highly challenging circumstances, you may need to depart from established procedures in order to care for patients. If concerns are raised about your decisions and actions it will always be considered, taking into account the factors relevant to the environment, resources, guidelines or protocols in place at the time.

Council has planned to operate as usual during these unsettling times and will be working remotely, as required, to ensure we can continue our core functions. As you would expect we will endeavour to keep you abreast of updates that we think are relevant whilst trying not to inundate you with duplicate content from other organisations.

We recognise that the workforce is under both enormous workload and workplace pressure. While acknowledging our role as a regulator rather than a pharmacy organisation, we will continue to do everything we can to support you at this time, working alongside the pharmacy and health sector organisations. If we have not addressed something of regulatory concern to you in respect to COVID-19 please email us at: COVID-19@pharmacycouncil.org.nz .

Noho ora mai

Jeff Harrison / Michael Pead
Chair / Chief Executive