

## Practising in a COVID-19 pandemic environment

April 2020

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. Council is re-emphasising that public safety can only be properly served when pharmacists and other pharmacy staff are safe and well. Follow guidance from sector organisations with messaging on processes and systems to help you do this.

### Look After 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.

### Continuing to offer pharmacy services

**You should not risk exposure to COVID-19 when providing care to patients.** 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. 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.

### 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.

### COVID-19 updates

Council seeks to reassure pharmacists that there is a sector leadership group working on COVID-19 issues, meeting several times a week and in constant contact, monitoring and responding to issues, and proactively planning for what might be required next. Council is an active participant in this group and contributes to centralised messages being distributed by it and others.

Please continue to monitor emails from sector organisations in the first instance, or text alerts. The same messages will be available from any of: the Ministry of Health website, Health Pathways, Central TAS, PHARMAC and a dedicated open access section of the Pharmaceutical Society website.

Updates relate to:

- Pharmacy Security
- PPE
- Monthly dispensing

- Funding package for Community Pharmacy
- Prescription format accepted for legality and funding (fax and electronic)
- Waiver of need for prescription hard copies matching faxed prescriptions from 1 March until further notice
- Legislation changes during the pandemic

### **Important Technical Guidance**

Pharmaceutical Society has guidance, along with the Ministry of Health. Refer [HERE](#)

Any questions, please contact us at [COVID-19@pharmacycouncil.org.nz](mailto:COVID-19@pharmacycouncil.org.nz) .