

FIP commitment to leveraging pharmacists to build vaccine confidence and address vaccine hesitancy and complacency

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FIP Development Goals



Vaccination strategies will not be universal and fully successful until the global challenge of vaccine hesitancy is adequately addressed.

Vaccine hesitancy - concerns related to vaccination or outright refusal to receive vaccines despite availability - is a major threat to global health and an important barrier to the success of vaccination strategies worldwideⁱ. Barriers such as misinformation and distrust in vaccines can compromise not only the health of individuals but also public health as a whole.

The World Health Organization (WHO) cites complacency, inconvenience and lack of confidence as the primary factors behind vaccine hesitancyⁱⁱ. Understanding vaccine hesitancy is complex because a patient's concerns with vaccination often exist on a spectrum. There is variance in the level of distrust towards vaccines across geographical location, patient demographics and type of vaccine in questionⁱⁱⁱ.

Additionally, the new digital age has made it easier than ever to share information which may not be based on scientific evidence, yet has just as much potential to shape public opinion^{iv}.

Vaccine hesitancy and concerns can be due to a variety of factors, including concerns over safety, efficacy, moral/philosophical issues or poor health literacy, for example.

This effect is further exacerbated during periods of global uncertainty such as the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, in February 2020, the WHO officially declared a concomitant "infodemic" in response to the massive amounts of misinformation shared regarding COVID-19^v.

As such, addressing vaccine hesitancy, building vaccine confidence and effectively communicating the value of vaccines to patients is an imperative for global health and for the pharmacy profession in particular.

The International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP), which brings together 146 organisations of pharmacists, pharmaceutical scientists and pharmaceutical educators, and represents over four million pharmacists from around the world, believes it is essential that pharmacy and other civil society organisations join forces and outline synergistic and complementary advocacy actions for broader access to and convenience of vaccination services through a diversity of providers and pathways, and to address vaccine hesitancy from multiple perspectives.

FIP has advocated a greater participation of pharmacists in the vaccination space through a variety of roles, ranging from improving community awareness and providing evidence-based advice, addressing vaccine hesitancy and concerns, distributing and dispensing vaccines, administering vaccines and updating vaccination records. These roles were supported by the World Health Organization in the joint WHO-FIP Guidelines on Good Pharmacy Practice in 2011^{vi}, and they continue to expand year after year worldwide in a consolidated manner^{vii, viii}.

Pharmacists' accessibility, expert knowledge, trust by populations and frequent interactions with patients make them uniquely positioned to engage in meaningful conversations and tackle vaccine hesitancy. This crucial role can contribute to increasing vaccination coverage rates and improving protection to individuals and communities.

FIP commits to support this important role by pharmacists and advocates the widespread utilisation of pharmacists to overcome vaccine hesitancy, complacency, misinformation and disinformation around the world. In this way, pharmacists can fulfil their role as advisors, supporters and implementers of public health globally.

FIP commits to join forces with other healthcare professionals' organisations, and other allied civil society organisations to raise awareness about this major threat to global health and to advocate actions to minimise its impact on vaccination coverage and on individual- and community-level immunity against vaccine-preventable diseases.

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References

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