

FIP recommendations for pharmacists' effective regulatory preparedness in disaster and emergency settings

Pharmacists play a crucial role in disaster and emergency response by ensuring access to healthcare services, the safe and efficient distribution of medicinal products and medical devices, and managing resources. These comprehensive recommendations provide a strategic framework for proactive planning, training, and collaborative response. This guidance is very useful for pharmacists, pharmacy teams and relevant stakeholders in regulation, government, industry, and educational institutions, in addition to pharmacy professional organisations. This document provides guidance which will enable enhanced preparedness and preplanning, and can strengthen pharmacy's role in supporting effective and efficient disaster and emergency responses.

The efforts to prepare for disaster and emergency must begin now, during times of non-emergency. There must be enabling legislation, regulations and policy in place to position pharmacists to provide critical patient-centred care and to ensure the continued supply of medicines to the population during such emergency situations. This can be done by addressing the following areas:

Continuity of care and meeting patients' health needs in accordance with their competencies, regulated at national level

- Pharmacists may approve prescriptions for refills ("continued care prescribing") of chronic medicines or ongoing therapy, and initiate new therapies with medicines listed in a schedule of "emergency access".
- Pharmacists should be authorised to extend and/or renew the prescription for medicines for non-communicable diseases at least until normal healthcare conditions are restored.
- Pharmacists should be authorised to administer medicines for injection and vaccines.
- Pharmacists may order, perform and interpret diagnostic and screening tests.

Supply chain integrity and management

- Establish policy and procedures to ensure all medicines and medical products are received from a licensed and trusted (primary and secondary) supplier.
- Create a system of supply chain checks and compliance verification processes to prevent substandard and falsified (SF) medicines and medical products from reaching the patient.
- Create an alert or reporting system to notify pharmacies, healthcare providers and suppliers of:
 - "short supply" lists of medicines;
 - policy measures and recommendations to manage these situations (i.e., for rationing and substitution, if available, as per the national regulations and guidelines); and,
 - SF medicines discovered in the supply chain or threatening the integrity of the supply chain.
- Have legislation in place that allows the implementation of mechanisms for requesting and accepting medicines and medical products from other jurisdictions that guarantee the efficacy and interchangeability of the products as well as their quality and safety.

Pharmacy healthcare workforce

- Create an allocation process for temporary licensure of qualified healthcare professionals to attend emergency pharmaceutical care centres for pharmacists to provide patient centred care in the affected locations.
- Establish the importance of identifying a group of pharmacists with training and, whenever possible, experience in emergency and disaster response, who constitute an intervention group on standby, at different levels (local, regional and national) and for a certain period of time.
- Allow other healthcare centres in communities where there is no community pharmacy or where, as a result of the emergency, it is temporarily unavailable, to be used as temporary pharmacy licensed facilities to allow pharmacists to practice and attend to the needs of the community.
- Create protective provisions for pharmacists and pharmacy staff to support workplace safety and personnel self care.
- Establish or maintain communication links among community pharmacies through professional pharmaceutical or pharmacy associations to receive and report information pertinent to the disaster and emergency.
- Establish or maintain protocols for tele-consultation and distance care services prioritising onsite care.

Pharmacy healthcare leadership

- Ministries of health to notify pharmacies directly when declaring a state of emergency through the pertinent communication channels so that the pharmacy emergency preparedness plans can be initiated.
- Regulators, pharmacy organisation leaders, managers and pharmacists with authority to create a pharmacy emergency preparedness manual adapted to the national context, with regular reviews and updates.
- Establish a credential verification process for the temporary licensure of qualified healthcare professionals, pharmacy technicians and emergency corps.
- Pharmacy representatives at local level to establish or maintain emergency communication links with community pharmacies to receive and report information pertinent to the disaster and emergency.
- Establish community pharmacies as information centres for disaster alerts, information and dialogue.
- Establish alternative options during times of electrical supply outages and unsafe drinking water.
- Create an ad-hoc committee within the (local or national) public health administration for the management of these situations, in collaboration with pharmacist representatives.