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PGEU GPUE

Pharmaceutical Group of European Union
Groupement Pharmaceutique de l'Union Européenne

Statement

Sustainable European Community
Pharmacies
Part of the Solution





In times of economic crisis, when all health budgets are under severe pressure, effectiveness and efficiency are the key considerations. European community pharmacies make a unique contribution to the quality and cost-effectiveness of health systems.

Why?

- Highly accessible and available

The pharmacist is a highly qualified health professional specialising in medicines at the heart of European communities:

- Pharmacies are the most widely distributed healthcare facility in Europe. According to a recent PGEU survey, 98% of European patients can reach their nearest community pharmacy within 30 minutes, while 58 % of respondents indicated that their closest community pharmacy was within 5 minutes of their home.
- Pharmacies have, in general, longer opening hours than other sources of health advice (on average in Europe 48 hours per week)¹.
- Pharmacies are accessible to all members of the community, including the most vulnerable, and those with the least means, without an appointment.
- The role of community pharmacies is also special relevant in rural areas where sometimes they are the only healthcare facilities nearby.
- Adding up the economic contribution of pharmacies
- The healthcare pathway is becoming more complex. The management of medication by pharmacists maximises the benefits and minimises the risks inherent in the use of medicines by patients, through better selection, optimisation and utilisation of the most frequent therapeutic intervention in the modern health system.
- Pharmacists' advice on medicines helps to avoid adverse drug reactions (for example when identifying interactions), improves adherence, and avoids inappropriate use² of medicines, in particular in those European countries where pharmacists can access the patient's medication history.
- Since pharmacies are highly accessible, they are frequently the first port of call in the healthcare system, providing initial advice, and where necessary referring patients to a physician³ or other relevant services. Night and day, seven days a week including public holidays, pharmacists answer the primary health care needs of their local population, reducing the burden on physician practices and providing back up health services for minor ailments and common conditions.

¹ PGEU Database 2011.

² Chamorro et al. Effect of pharmacist involvement in adherence to medications in patients with high to moderate cardiovascular risk. *Aten Primaria*. 2011 May;43(5):245-53. Epub 2011 Jan 5.

³ Pharmacists rather than GPs should be first contact for minor ailments, report says. *BMJ* 2008;337:a775.



Existing evidence⁴ suggest that community pharmacies' interventions reduces the burden on other primary care services by 29%, or to 25% to the whole health system.

- Equally, community pharmacies, contribute to the population's health education in order to delay the appearance of chronic illnesses, and fight against obesity, alcoholism and tobacco use.
- Pharmacists play an important role in improving the affordability of health care, for example, when promoting greater use of generic medicines.
- In many European countries, pharmacists provide additional services such as^{5,6}:
 - o basic diagnostic testing
 - o medication use reviews contributing to the rational use of medicines,
 - o medicines related waste management, etc.
- Community pharmacists from their own resources, pre-finance the pharmaceutical expenditure of the health system, so that in most circumstances patients do not have to pay the cost of the medicines from their own pocket.
- Community pharmacies across the EU employ 400.000 pharmacists, as well as other pharmacy staff, and provide training sites for pharmacy students.

For all these reasons, the contribution of community pharmacists impacts on the quality of health care but also on health care cost containment.

That is why it is essential that the network of community pharmacists can continue fulfilling its mission to improve health of the communities they serve. If their independence, the quality and range of health services they provide is to be guaranteed, for the benefit of patients and society at large, pharmacies must be economically sustainable.

Measures impacting on the sustainability of pharmacies should be carefully considered taking into account the services pharmacies provide and the costs they help to save.

Some measures currently under discussion, including increasing commercialisation in the sector, and reducing the public health rules/regulations that have to be respected, will necessarily have important consequences for health system quality and costs. It is widely recognised (including by governments) that the contribution of community pharmacies to European health systems can be further developed through the provision of a wider range of pharmacy based services, bringing further efficiency to patient care. This will not be possible if the Community Pharmacy network is not sustainable, and the quality of service provision undermined.

⁴ Study on Assessment of health interventions at the Community Pharmacies in Spain, CGCOF 2003.

⁵ Laaksonen R, et al. Performance of community pharmacists in providing clinical medication reviews. *Ann Pharmacother.* 2010 Jul-Aug;44(7-8):1181-90. Epub 2010 Jun 22.

⁶ PGEU Annual Report 2010



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PGEU calls on European governments to recognise the unique asset that is the community pharmacy network, and to safeguard the significant contribution of community pharmacies to the effectiveness and efficiency of health systems.

Sustainable community pharmacies are part of the solution.