

Position Statement: **Pharmacy-Based Vaccination**

Introduction

Vaccination is one of the most effective and cost-effective public health interventions to prevent disease and protect communities. It also has important roles in supporting health outcomes, health system resilience, economic productivity, and antimicrobial stewardship. However, vaccination rates in many countries remain below the levels needed to fully optimise public health benefits and prevent outbreaks of vaccine-preventable disease. Closing this gap requires a full system response, including making full use of the trusted, highly qualified healthcare professionals already embedded in communities across the world.

Community pharmacies are an essential component of successful vaccination strategies. They are the most accessible health care destination; present in communities across urban, rural and underserved settings, open outside standard business hours, and accessible without an appointment. Community pharmacists are highly trained healthcare professionals who already serve as a first and frequent point of contact for many people - for prescription medicines, to seek advice on minor ailments, or for other health products and services - and these interactions create valuable opportunities to identify vaccination needs and intervene opportunistically to increase vaccination uptake. Community pharmacists are providing an increasing range of health services and advice, including preventive health. They are highly trusted professionals, and through frequent personalised connections are well placed to address and educate on issues relating to vaccination and vaccine hesitancy.

While many countries have enabled and expanded pharmacy-based vaccination, community pharmacies remain an underutilised partner in expanding vaccination coverage and enabling more efficient use of health system resources. In countries where it is allowed, pharmacy-based vaccination improves access, equity, and health system sustainability and resilience. For people in rural or remote communities, those with limited mobility, or those who cannot easily take time away from work, a local pharmacy is often far more accessible than a GP clinic or hospital service. Pharmacy-based vaccination also relieves pressure on other primary care providers who are in high demand, complementing existing channels and allowing the wider health system to direct its skills and resources efficiently to areas where they are most needed.

The following principles and health system actions are required to make this a reality.

Call To Action

1. Governments should engage, empower and promote community pharmacies as local preventive health hubs, facilitating inclusion in administration programmes across a broad range of vaccines.
2. Trained community pharmacists in all countries should progressively be authorised to administer vaccinations against a full range of vaccine-preventable diseases, according to the national vaccination schedule, for patients of all clinically appropriate ages. Where a vaccine requires a prescription, patients should be able to have a vaccine administered in a pharmacy without requiring a prescription from another healthcare professional.
3. Vaccination training should be incorporated into pharmacy university courses at the undergraduate level and community pharmacy organisations should be empowered, in collaboration with health authorities, to offer certified vaccination training programmes.
4. Community pharmacies, and their representative organisations, should be integrated into local outbreak preparedness, and response arrangements to natural disasters and serious health threats, including the rapid delivery of vaccination services in urgent and high-risk situations.
5. Community pharmacies should have access to publicly funded vaccine supply through procurement channels that are compatible with, and make use of, standard pharmacy workflows.
6. Community pharmacies should be provided with access to view a patient's vaccination history to ensure safety and identify catch-up opportunities, as well as to add to and update records with vaccines administered in the pharmacy.
7. Governments and other bodies involved in collecting vaccination data should ensure regular, timely and publicly accessible reporting of high-quality data on vaccination administration, disaggregated by relevant factors including geography, vaccination venue type and patient age, to enable transparent monitoring and evidence-based decision making. Community pharmacies can actively contribute to this objective.
8. Where vaccination services are funded wholly or in part by a third party (government or insurer), full, fair and timely reimbursement and remuneration arrangements must be provided for the vaccine and the clinical service. Where equivalent vaccination services are funded when delivered by other providers, pharmacies should be eligible for equivalent funding and operational arrangements. Adequate and sustainable payment for vaccination-related activities is essential to ensure feasibility, support uptake, and appropriately recognise the responsibilities assumed.