

European-wide review on how community pharmacies dealt with COVID

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A network of community pharmacies must be involved in future country preparedness plans for public health emergencies, such as the COVID19 pandemic, when a rapid response to massive population is needed within

a short time frame. This is just one of the recommendations to come out of a European-wide research project co-led by a University of Huddersfield Professor in Medicines and Healthcare.

A comprehensive paper, published in the journal *Research in Social and Administrative Pharmacy*, covers 31 [pharmacy](#) interventions on COVID-19 in 32 countries in Europe and has been co-led by the University's Professor Zaheer-Ud-Din Babar, Director of the Pharmaceutical Policy and Practice Research Centre.

The interventions include prevention, response, and recovery measures. It also covers improved access to medicines, expanded powers granted to pharmacies, rapid antigen testing, and COVID-19 vaccination.

Professor Babar explained that community pharmacists have been included in pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response strategic guidance in the aftermath of the 2009 flu pandemic, however most examples are from US, Canada, and Australia and this is what prompted the authors to perform this research.

"By April 2020, there seemed to be few research studies detailing the interventions on COVID-19 provided by community pharmacists in Europe," said Professor Babar, "despite there being several news reports of relevant practice changes occurring almost every week which had emerged in early 2020 stemming from pharmacy associations."

While the research recognizes the report doesn't provide concrete guidance on practice and policy making, Professor Babar believes the findings can pave the way for pharmacy associations to explore negotiations with governments for enhanced pharmacy roles in facilitating access to essential medication, medication usually supplied in hospitals, emergency supply, in point-of-care anti-gen-based test screening, structured referral pathways of exposed patients to antibody

testing for immunity assessment and in vaccine administration.

The report also reveals that because community pharmacies were able to implement a wide array of interventions on COVID-19 this could have alleviated the burden on other [health care services](#) and therefore provided further valuable support to patients. Such interventions included reflected preparedness for stockpiling, increased demand for services and products, and important patient care interventions that exceeded the dispensing role.

The report also applauds the supporting role played by Pharmacy Associations during the pandemic in developing and updating guidance and emergency plans to assist community pharmacists.

"Research on pharmacy interventions on COVID-19 is still in its infancy but this report confirms the wide array of interventions provided and the expanded powers that were granted to community pharmacies," said Professor Babar.

"These findings may provide a significant impact to improve pharmacy research, policy, and practice in response to future [public health emergencies](#) in Europe and globally," he added.

More information: Suzete Costa et al, Pharmacy interventions on COVID-19 in Europe: Mapping current practices and a scoping review, *Research in Social and Administrative Pharmacy* (2021). [DOI: 10.1016/j.sapharm.2021.12.003](#)

Provided by University of Huddersfield

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