



College of Pharmacists of Manitoba

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March 2020

Guidelines for ensuring pharmacy accessibility during a health crisis, or pandemic

It is recognized that during a health crisis or pandemic, specific measures may be implemented globally in order to ensure the protection of the public. For example, during a pandemic, public health officials may recommend, or direct the employment of social distancing, along with requirements for self-isolation. Social distancing is a measure used to deliberately increase the physical space between people to avoid spreading illness.

While pharmacy professionals have an inherent duty to provide and maintain care, particularly during an emergent health crisis such as a pandemic, it is equally as important to ensure the safety of patients, as well as all pharmacy staff during the delivery of such care. The following guidance should be considered as a temporary safety measure during a pandemic, in ensuring the responsible provision of medications and care.

PHARMACY ACCESSIBILITY

Pharmacy facilities are constructed in a manner that offers essential pharmacy care via physical accessibility, with direct contact between the pharmacy professional, pharmacy staff, and patient. During a pandemic, pharmacies may choose to consider the implementation of alternative measures, such as limitations on public physical accessibility to the pharmacy. This is an extraordinary measure and intended to be used temporarily during an emergency. Limitations on physical access to a pharmacy facility may include:

- Restrictions on number of patients allowed in the facility
- Reliance on the use of telephone contact with patients, care givers, and agents as much as feasibly possible,
- Delivery of prepared prescription medications directly to patients or identified agents. This measure allows for continuity of care, with limited physical contact between patients and pharmacy professionals.

It remains essential for pharmacies to be accessible to the public and patients. Accessibility may be redefined during a pandemic, with limited physical contact, and the use of other means of contact, such as telephone.

Pharmacies choosing to temporarily limit public/patient physical access to the pharmacy facility as a safety precaution, must ensure patients are notified through appropriate signage, which

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To protect the health and well being of the public by ensuring and
promoting safe, patient-centred and progressive pharmacy practice in collaboration with other health-care providers.*

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includes clear details for contacting the pharmacy for care (ex. Pharmacy phone number, and hours of operation).

Pharmacy professionals should encourage delivery of prescriptions for all patients during a health crisis or pandemic (even those patients that may not be considered as vulnerable). This health safety measure further allows for limitations on physical contact, and a maintenance of social distancing.

These measures are of high importance while considering the health impacts on the vulnerable patient sector (elderly, immunocompromised, patients with pre-existing health conditions). Pharmacy professionals must recognize that any limitations imposed on physical accessibility to the pharmacy facility are only **temporary, and extraordinary** measures during an emergent health crisis, such as a pandemic. These temporary measures have an expiration based on direction from public health authorities, and/or regulatory authorities.

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