



هيئة الدواء المصرية
الإدارة المركزية للرعاية الصيدلانية
الإدارة العامة للممارسات الدوائية والصيدلانية

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Role of pharmacist during the COVID-19 pandemic

Pharmacists have long been known for their bridging roles between the public and other healthcare providers.

Being the most accessible; pharmacists often handle misinformation surrounding the COVID-19 medications and combat vaccines hesitancy.

At times of uncertainty, pharmacists can directly educate the public and help ease the burden over the healthcare system.

Therefore, in the light of the *World Pharmacists Day*, our newsletter will highlight the pharmacists' crucial role during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Role of Clinical Pharmacist during the COVID-19 Pandemic:

1- Antiviral stewardship during the pandemic.

2- Counseling patients on the use and potential harms of COVID-19 investigational medications.

3- Providing accurate data to the providers about safe drug use (e.g., how to formulate oral drugs when patients cannot swallow), drug-drug interactions, and adverse effects.

4- Participation in and facilitation of investigational drug studies in health systems through the following actions:

- ◆ Obtaining medications through compassionate use protocols.
- ◆ Identifying patients who are suitable candidates for investigational drugs.
- ◆ Collaborating with physicians and quickly coordinating with healthcare professionals in providing the service.
- ◆ Receiving, preparing, and delivering drugs to the patient's bedside.
- ◆ Reviewing and interpreting information on repurposed and investigational medications for other healthcare providers, especially when physicians are experiencing increased patients flow and thus may have limited time to read and evaluate new data as they are published.
- ◆ Evaluating risks and harms, safety and efficacy of investigational medications that all are lacking randomized clinical trials supporting their use and safety.
- ◆ Providing their recommendations regarding therapeutic protocols.



5- Educating patients and their caregivers about:

- ◆ Effective strategies to prevent acquisition and further spread of infection (e.g., optimal hand hygiene, social distancing, staying home if having respiratory symptoms).
- ◆ Symptomatic relief.
- ◆ Best resources for current COVID-19 and vaccination information.



6- Role in drug shortage during the COVID-19 pandemic:

A- Any medication shortage during the COVID-19 pandemic:

Including:

- ◆ Working proactively and identifying effective therapeutic alternatives.
- ◆ Enforcing the implementation of drug shortage mitigation strategies, if needed.
- ◆ Prioritizing drug supply to the patients who are most likely to benefit.

B- Shortage of COVID-19 investigational and repurposed medications:

Including:

- ◆ Developing formulary restriction criteria for COVID-19 therapies that are in limited supply.
- ◆ Educating providers about the restrictions.
- ◆ Monitoring compliance to the restrictions to ensure availability of the drug for patients in need

7- Support the healthcare team and infection prevention team to stop the spread of disease and optimize the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) :

Including:

A-Minimizing unnecessary use of PPE through:

- ◆ Limiting unnecessary entry into the patient room by:-
 - ◇ Aligning medication administration times.
 - ◇ IV to PO conversion when possible to decrease nurses need to respond to pump alerts.

B- Limiting staff exposure to aerosol generating procedures through:

- ◆ Participating in developing treatment protocols that limit unnecessary nebulizer use and instead favor use of metered dose inhalers for inpatients.

8- Performing therapeutic drug monitoring of investigational and repurposed COVID-19 medications:

- ◆ Assigning times for withdrawing samples for therapeutic drug monitoring.
- ◆ Relating timing to other medications administrations and drug interactions checking.
- ◆ Checking necessary lab withdraws for monitoring medications.



9- Role as drug information expert:

- ◆ Evaluating literature related to new or repurposed therapies.
- ◆ Help make decisions on system level and patient level.
- ◆ Providing other healthcare professionals with updated information on COVID-19 investigational and repurposed medications.

Role of Community Pharmacist during COVID-19 Pandemic :



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Community pharmacists are the most readily available healthcare providers and the easiest to reach

Roles of community pharmacist during COVID-19 Pandemic include the following:

1. Ensuring continuity of medication supply and management of medication shortage:

- ◆ Antiviral medications
- ◆ Antimicrobial agents
- ◆ Antipyretics
- ◆ Analgesics



2. Providing patient education and counseling on information regarding COVID-19:

- ◆ Nature of the virus.
- ◆ Mode of transmission.
- ◆ Symptoms.
- ◆ Infection prevention and control measures.
- ◆ When to seek medical care.

Pharmacists may develop information materials (posters, leaflets, text messages, app alerts, etc.) for the community in addition to accessing to specific websites.



3. Ensuring adequate storage and supply of appropriate stocks of pharmaceutical products and devices, such as facial masks.

4. Preparing disinfectants including alcohol based rubs.

5. Providing patient education and counseling on information regarding vaccination including COVID-19 vaccination.

Pharmacists can combat vaccination hesitancy by dealing with misconceptions and communicating information through their direct contact with the public.

6. Monitoring of chronic diseases.

This includes monitoring for chronic diseases as hypertension, diabetes during the COVID-19 pandemic

7. Risk assessment for the public and providing intervention or advise accordingly:

- ◆ Assessment of an individual's symptoms and recent history of travels and/or contact with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases.
- ◆ Providing counseling on home isolation or seeking medical advice.
- ◆ Referring patients for receiving immediate medical treatment.



Fever



Cough



Fatigue



Loss of taste or smell



Difficulty breathing

Risk assessment for the public and providing intervention or advise accordingly



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Hospital pharmacists may be asked to participate in the triage of COVID cases according to the following criteria AND community pharmacists may need to educate patients and direct them to address the cases according to :-

Criteria	Intervention
<p style="text-align: center;">No symptoms</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>AND</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">No known recent contact with confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 and no recent travel history to affected areas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Offer reassurance ◆ Highlight preventive measures ◆ Recommend social distancing ◆ Provide evidence-based information and advice (verbal /written)
<p style="text-align: center;">Symptoms</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>AND</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">No known recent contact with confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 and no recent travel history to affected areas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Offer reassurance ◆ Inform that risk of COVID-19 may exist ◆ Whenever possible, isolate the patient in a separate room ◆ Do not physically examine the patient ◆ Highlight preventive measures ◆ Recommend strict social distancing ◆ For high-risk patients, advise contacting emergency number ◆ Provide evidence-based information and advice (verbal /written)
<p style="text-align: center;">No symptoms</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>AND</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Known recent contact with confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 and no recent travel history to affected areas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Offer reassurance ◆ Inform that risk of COVID-19 may exist ◆ Highlight preventive measures ◆ Recommend strict social distancing ◆ Recommend tracing contact history ◆ If symptoms appear within 14 days following contact with confirmed or suspected case, contact emergency number ◆ Provide evidence-based information and advice (verbal /written)
<p style="text-align: center;">Symptoms</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>AND</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Known recent contact with confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 and no recent travel history to affected areas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Offer reassurance ◆ Inform that risk of COVID-19 may exist ◆ Whenever possible, isolate the patient in a separate room ◆ Highlight preventive measures ◆ Recommend strict social distancing ◆ For high-risk patients, advise contacting emergency number ◆ Provide evidence-based information and advice (verbal /written)
<p style="text-align: center;">Unavoidable travel plans to affected areas or contact with confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Offer reassurance ◆ Inform about the situation and ways of transmission ◆ Highlight preventive measures (especially frequent hand washing and avoiding touching one`s face) ◆ Provide evidence-based information and advice (verbal /written)

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