



18 Shrewsbury Road,
Ballsbridge, Dublin 4,
Ireland.

T. 01 218 4000
F. 01 283 7678
E. info@pharmaceuticalsociety.ie
W. www.pharmaceuticalsociety.ie

Submission to the Department of Health on Your Health is Your Wealth – Health and Wellbeing Framework 2012-2020

The Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (PSI) is an independent statutory body, established by the Pharmacy Act 2007. It is charged with, and is accountable for, the effective regulation of pharmacy services in Ireland, including responsibility for supervising compliance with the Act. It works for the public interest to protect the health and safety of the public by regulating the pharmacy profession and pharmacies. The PSI appreciates this opportunity to contribute to the development of the Your Health is Your Wealth – Health and Wellbeing Framework 2012-2020.

The PSI, through its *Pharmacy Ireland 2020* initiative, seeks to encourage, facilitate and support the greater involvement of pharmacists in the delivery of integrated, patient-centred, cost-effective health services, and the development of pharmacy services in Ireland in line with international evidence and best practice.

The PSI is committed to providing guidance enabling pharmacists to sustain, assure and improve professional standards and, therefore, maintain the health, care, safety and wellbeing of patients, and is committed to working with the wider health care sector, to focus on the protection and enhancement of public health.

The Role of the Pharmacist:

Over 600,000 people visit community pharmacies in Ireland each week and pharmacists play a pivotal role in providing a frontline public health service to the community as a whole. Pharmacies are an essential part of the healthcare infrastructure readily available to the public, and are therefore ideally placed to play an increasingly important and visible public role in the provision of frontline advice and education around public health issues. Pharmacists should be utilised to help bridge some of the gaps and needs of our primary care and health care systems. Expanded pharmacist-delivered patient care can be an essential component of any collaborative care model.

In line with the PSI's *Pharmacy Ireland 2020* initiative, the role of the pharmacist is likely to expand and evolve in the coming years, and patients and the public will increasingly see their pharmacist as having a more important health advisory role and their local pharmacy, as a key point of health information and services, readily accessible to the public.

Underpinning and facilitating these developments is the PSI's pharmacy education reform programme, which involves moving the undergraduate and pre-registration education to a 5-year integrated Masters programme, and the introduction of mandatory continuing professional development (CPD) for registered pharmacists. This is to ensure that student pharmacists in education are prepared for the roles of the future and that practitioners are supported in developing skills and roles to contribute to the needs of patients and the health service.

Many of the proposed developments in relation to an expanded role for pharmacists, and the provision of more patient services in pharmacies, will be facilitated by the work of the recently established **Irish Institute of Pharmacy**. This Institute will manage the continuing professional development system for pharmacists and will also be responsive to evolving healthcare needs in driving the future development of the pharmacy profession, and its role in maintaining and improving public health. Maximising the expertise of the pharmacist, the pharmacy profession as a whole, and each pharmacy practice is critical to advance public health. Through the Institute the development of inter-professional education and training will aim to strengthen the collaborative structures in the primary care and other health service teams. Health reform calls for an integrated workforce that utilises the skill sets of health care professionals across disciplines.

Collaboration between the pharmacist and other primary care services provides the patient with higher quality, safer, and more comprehensive health care through a team approach. Pharmacists can play a pivotal role in the referral to, and promotion of, allied health services. Further integration of pharmacists into the primary care team will improve continuity of care throughout the service. The PSI believes there is a role for the pharmacist to get more involved in educating patients and directing them to the relevant information and services. This is a strength within primary care which could be utilised to a greater extent in the future, in order to develop a more fluid and dynamic primary care structure. The pharmacist could strengthen the service provided to the patient through improving patient engagement with services.

The safe, effective and responsible supply and use of medicines, as an EPHO, is of utmost importance in the enhancement of public health. Pharmacists are uniquely qualified to provide additional patient care services in this area through collaborative and synergistic efforts that complement the overall service structure. This initiative could also have potential positive implications for cost effective delivery of services, through the promotion of rational prescribing and rational use of medicines, and could include issues such as safe disposal of medicines.

A key element of the educational developments within pharmacy is the new Core Competency Framework for Pharmacists which was recently developed by the PSI. Significantly, pharmaceutical public health has been recognised as one of the six key domains of the framework. The PSI through this framework also recognises the key leadership and team working skills which are essential to healthcare professionals maximising their contribution and influence in terms of improving public health. In addition, the roles of healthcare professionals such as pharmacists as educators and in terms of research are also recognised, both of which are critically important to public health initiatives and policy. Pharmacists can also have an educational role in a variety of settings, from community development and health settings to formal educational settings such as schools and adult education facilities within their respective communities.

The potential role of the pharmacist in the economics of prevention is substantial. The pharmacist and community pharmacy, as an accessible source of health information, have an important role to play in the various levels of prevention¹. They may instigate primary prevention through health promotion, provision of information and advice. Pharmacists also have a capacity to contribute to secondary and tertiary prevention services e.g. through screening and targeted chronic disease management initiatives.

All pharmacies now have private patient consultation areas in place, since November 2010, where patients can avail of the expertise, counselling and advice of the pharmacist in an environment which aids patient confidentiality. The availability of this facility enhances the ability of the pharmacist to provide health education and advice, particularly around sensitive issues such as sexual health.

The inclusion of pharmacists in the primary care arm of preparedness and planning for public health emergencies is key in order for efficient roll out of services in such circumstances, such as the PSI led initiative for pharmacy involvement in the strategy of response to the H1N1 pandemic.

The issue of health inequalities is a recurring point in the EPHOs. Utilising existing pharmacy practice initiatives and encouraging future developments could relieve some of the projected burden of access to quality care, reduce health disparities, and improve overall health care delivery. Pharmacists and pharmacies are integral to the provision of and access to quality patient care. The PSI through its work will continue to support national policy initiatives in respect of public health and to support the development of the profession in Ireland so that it can be positioned to meet the evolving needs of patients, the health service and the wider public.

Submitted by: Róisín Cunniffe
Pharmacy Practice Development (PPD) Unit of
The Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (PSI) – the pharmacy regulator
(on behalf of the PSI Acting Registrar Ciara McGoldrick)

Contact: Róisín Cunniffe, PPD Unit, PSI

PSI House,
Fenian Street,
Dublin 2
Email:
Phone: 01 2184000
Fax: 01 2837678

¹Your Health is Your Wealth – Health and Wellbeing Framework 2012-2020- Economics of Prevention paper- (public consultation documentation)