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Dear Colleagues

Supporting pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and pharmacy teams throughout the second COVID-19 wave

COVID-19 has been a challenge for the entire UK population but frontline clinicians and teams have been particularly affected. Thank you on behalf of the pharmacy professions for your remarkable work to reduce the impact of this crisis on the lives of our fellow citizens. You were a testament to our profession during the first wave and we all know you have been working tirelessly to support patients since.

Unfortunately, as we all know, there is already sustained additional pressure on parts of the NHS as we manage COVID-19 and prepare for potential deployment of COVID-19 vaccines. Pressure will inevitably be exacerbated by staff shortages due to sickness or caring responsibilities and the impact of testing regimes will be important too. Due to the actions of the whole population of all four nations, the initial peak of pressure will be significantly lower than it would have been, but it may well be prolonged throughout the winter period, with wide local variation in cases, requiring a sustained response from all the healthcare professions and teams.

Impressive scientific progress continues on vaccine development. While full safety and efficacy data is needed, it shows the power of medical science to tackle this infection. We expect more scientific progress over the next months, but this will not change the reality this winter.

We are confident all members of the pharmacy team will continue to respond rapidly and professionally to the pandemic and all its challenges. We recognise some pharmacy professionals may find themselves working in unfamiliar circumstances or surroundings, or for professionals, working in clinical areas outside their usual practice for the benefit of patients and the population as a whole.

This can be stressful and you may have concerns about both the professional practicalities and implications of working in such circumstances. In partnership with patients, we want pharmacy professionals always to use their professional judgement to assess risk and to make sure people receive safe care, informed by the values and principles set out in our professional standards. We expect all registrants to follow General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) and Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland (PSNI) guidance, using their judgement in applying the principles of best practice to the situations they face.

It is the responsibility of community pharmacy owners, GP practices, hospitals, trusts, health boards and healthcare leaders to ensure that all pharmacy professionals working in their organisations are well supported to do this and channels for raising and acting on concerns remain open and accessible to staff.

We expect employers, statutory education bodies, professional bodies, national NHS and health and social care organisations to be flexible in terms of their approach. Healthcare professional regulators, including the GPhC and PSNI, have committed to take into account factors relevant to the environment in which the professional is working, including relevant information about resources, guidelines or protocols in place at the time. The healthcare regulators previously released [a joint statement](#) to explain this.

We are also determined to ensure the long-term prospects of pharmacy students and those who are provisionally registered are not compromised by this prolonged health crisis. The GPhC and PSNI, together with the education bodies in the four nations, and Pharmacy Schools Council are working on this. We also have been monitoring the impact on pre-registration pharmacy technicians and greatly appreciate their hard work, and that of their course providers, tutors and their employers who are supporting them to stay on track with their training programmes and progress to registration.

It is also vitally important to look after each other during this time. We want pharmacy professionals to feel supported and cared for at work, the pandemic is a difficult time for everyone.

Finally, we would like to thank every single one of you for your tireless efforts to support patients.



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