



March 18, 2020

Joint Special Committee on COVID 19 Response
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Co-Chairs Roblan and Holvey, Members of the Joint Special Committee:

The Oregon Pharmacy Coalition represents pharmacists who are patient care providers who work in acute, ambulatory and community care settings.

We applaud your efforts to ensure that COVID-19 testing and treatment are available to all Oregonians. However, inadequate patient access to healthcare providers jeopardizes patients' ability to receive care. COVID-19 poses a critical threat to our healthcare capacity; should the number of cases continue to grow, hospital emergency departments and physician offices may be quickly overwhelmed. Patient access to needed care can be significantly expanded through the full utilization of all frontline providers, including pharmacists.

Pharmacists practicing in hospitals, clinics, physician offices and community settings are trained to treat infectious diseases and can significantly expand healthcare access. In many communities pharmacists are the most accessible healthcare providers and the first touchpoint of patient engagement with the healthcare system. In some communities, pharmacists may be the only healthcare provider that is immediately available to patients.

To fully deliver on the promise of coverage and treatment, we urge you to take immediate steps to maximize pharmacist involvement in COVID-19 testing, and when a treatment or vaccine is approved, the provision of immunization and antiviral therapy. Specific suggestions for policies that would ensure patient access to pharmacist care during this crisis can be found below and in the attached statements from the American Society of Health-System Pharmacy (ASHP).

- Activation of the emergency provisions of Division 7 Emergency Pharmacy rules
 - 30 day refills
 - Mobile pharmacies
 - Remote telemedicine and pharmacy services
- Involvement of pharmacies in management of patients with mild symptoms and COVID-19 testing

- Telemedicine advice for patients regarding social distancing, isolation, and treatment guidelines for COVID-19
- Reimbursement for general patient care services provided by pharmacists.

Pharmacists are trusted and available providers of general health questions and advice on self-treatment and management of acute diseases. They are knowledgeable and able to appropriately refer patients to physicians for acute diagnosis and treatment of common disorders. Pharmacies are accessible and appropriate settings for initial triage of patients with and without COVID-19 infections. Pharmacists stand ready to fight this public health emergency. Decisive action to remove access barriers will ensure that pharmacists' expertise and services can benefit patients and reduce pressure on emergency services.

We greatly appreciate the thoughtful and swift response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Oregon Society of Health-System Pharmacists

Oregon State Pharmacy Association