



Pharmacy is going forwards with confidence

Over the past 20 years, the EPF has led the way in thinking about new roles and innovations, **Ornella Barra**, Co-Chief Operating Officer, Walgreens Boots Alliance says. This has put pharmacy in a good place for the future...

"Throughout the pandemic, and as we look ahead to the better days to come, there has been a recognition of the role played by community pharmacies. This is especially true in those countries that are looking to pharmacies to deploy and administer vaccinations, support COVID-19 testing or help protect the most vulnerable in society by delivering medicines to their homes. Once again, pharmacies are showing that they are an integral partner in health systems.

I have spoken many times about the importance of using all kinds of digital technology as an enabler for providing better services and meeting patients' needs and expectations. But nothing is going to replace the importance of face-to-face interactions between pharmacists and their patients, providing trusted advice and support in the heart of local communities.

When I look back over the past twenty years of the EPF, I am amazed at how much pharmacy has changed, how much progress we have made and how much we are already taking for granted. Early meetings of the EPF revolved around products, pricing, prescriptions and building relationships with pharmaceutical manufacturers. All of these remain important, but now we focus on the pharmacist as an equal partner in the provision of primary healthcare.

We look directly at our customers and how we can improve their wider health and wellbeing, and how we can offer them services – often enabled by new technologies such as point-of-care testing or video-calling – when, where and how they need them. All of these with the personal touch of the pharmacist, and the patient at the centre.

I am proud of all the work the EPF and its members have done. I especially look at our ground-breaking White Paper in 2015. Our core topics of vaccinations, self-care, screening, disease prevention and medicines adherence remain crucial today. Even more important is the way in which EPF members have kept their eyes on the future. We have embraced new developments in digital healthcare and adapted to changing consumer behaviours with a truly omni-channel offer, which feels personal to the patient and meets their needs. We have even started to see pharmacists using pharmacogenomic data to alter individual's medicines.

The role of the pharmacist is changing and will continue to evolve. We can already see how the pandemic has accelerated some trends, such as telemedicine, bringing a decade of change in just one year. New services, like pharmacist-led vaccinations, that we have been promoting for a

long time have received a vital impetus because of the pressures across healthcare systems.

Pharmacies have taken all of this in their stride. Customer apps, remote consultations, home deliveries and wellbeing services have quickly become a way of life. We expect much of this to continue even after the pandemic passes. Our work in the past has paid off and our future looks brighter than ever.

One thing that hasn't changed is the importance of accessibility to affordable healthcare, especially in rural and disadvantaged communities. Pharmacies continue to be open and welcoming places where local communities know they can get trusted advice – someone they can talk to openly about a whole range of topics. Pharmacists continue their role of educating and informing, especially encouraging confidence in the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

All of this gives me great hope for the future of pharmacy. As long as we retain our spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship, and as long as we never lose sight of the importance of the trusted relationship between pharmacists and patients, the legacy of the EPF will be something that pharmacy can continue to grow and build on, going forward with confidence.

I wish you all good wishes and the best of luck in all your endeavours."



United Kingdom



Community pharmacies support COVID-19 vaccinations

Nearly 200 community pharmacies across England have started administering COVID-19 vaccinations, with more being added as the UK expands its vaccine programme.

Independent and multiple pharmacies have each committed to delivering at least 1,000 vaccinations per week. Some pharmacies have adapted parts of their premises to ensure large numbers of patients can be seen quickly, while still maintaining social distancing and hygiene guidelines.

Members of Parliament have expressed their support and want to see more pharmacies taking part in the vaccination programme. Discussions are underway with government officials to explore how a larger number of pharmacies could deliver fewer vaccines per week, once supplies are available.

Changes to regulations have also made it easier for pharmacies to run vaccination clinics outside of their normal premises, with some vaccination centres being set up in churches, community halls, golf clubs and cinemas.

(Source: NHS England, February 2021)

Portugal



Mayor makes case for pharmacies to vaccinate

In a recent interview, the Mayor of Porto, Rui Moreira, made the case for allowing Portuguese pharmacies to administer COVID-19 vaccines. Noting that pharmacies already have the expertise to manage and administer flu vaccinations, he believes that pharmacies should be able to step in and support the healthcare system when primary care is overwhelmed. Moreira also highlighted that as well as being in convenient locations, pharmacies are trusted by their communities to provide counselling and advice. What's more, patients are becoming increasingly reluctant to visit health centres for fear of contracting COVID-19.

In 2020, pharmacists were included in Portugal's National Health Service influenza vaccination programme for the first time. While pharmacists have been legally permitted to administer flu vaccines since the introduction of the legislation in 2007, their role was primarily in the private market.

(Source: Revista Saúde, February 2021)

Spain



Galician pharmacies seek to detect new COVID-19 cases

The autonomous community of Galicia has launched a pilot programme in six pharmacies to help increase its capacity to detect new COVID-19 cases among asymptomatic people. The Galician pharmacies voluntarily participating in the programme will offer saliva kits to the target populations, which initially include people aged between 40 and 64 years. These kits will then be sent to a laboratory for analysis. In the case of a positive result, the patient will need to receive a PCR (polymerase chain reaction) test to confirm the diagnostic.

The pilot will be progressively rolled out to 235 pharmacies in the province of Pontevedra, before being extended to all Galician pharmacies willing to participate.

(Source: Xunta de Galicia, February 2021)

Italy



Two regions allow COVID-19 vaccine in pharmacies

Pharmacies in Lombardy and Piedmont will now be able to administer COVID-19 vaccinations.

In Lombardy, an agreement will enable the supply of vaccine doses to pharmacies and administration to the public, under the supervision of a doctor, nurse or other trained healthcare professional. Regional healthcare authorities will provide funding of 6 EUR per dose administered, or a sum of approximately 12 EUR for a two-dose vaccine. The framework was agreed with pharmacy industry association Federfarma and the federation of Italian pharmacists, Ordini dei Farmacisti.

In January, the Piedmont region also agreed to allow the administration of COVID-19 vaccine doses in pharmacies, under the supervision of a trained healthcare professional. Other Italian regions are expected to follow suit.

(Source: IHS Marketkit, January 2021)

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The Netherlands



Health Minister thanks pharmacists for their support

The First Deputy Prime Minister of the Netherlands and Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport, Hugo De Jonge (VWS), thanked pharmacists for their support with COVID-19 vaccinations in a letter to parliament. He said that he recognises how hard community pharmacists have worked to help manage the pandemic.

In the Netherlands, pharmacists can work with their local healthcare facilities to support the transport, repackaging and preparation of the vaccines, which have to follow strict temperature and handling requirements. Despite not being allowed to administer the vaccines themselves, pharmacists are the ideal healthcare professionals for these tasks due to their training and skills.

(Source: KNMP, February 2021)

Czech Republic



Czech pharmacists to play bigger role in COVID-19 vaccinations

In January, the Czech Chamber of Pharmacists (ČLNK) met with the Prime Minister, Andrej Babiš, and the Minister of Health, Jan Blatný, to discuss the involvement of Czech pharmacists in the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

During the meeting, the parties agreed that pharmacists should be allowed to participate in the preparation of vaccines in hospital pharmacies and vaccination centres. Voluntary pharmacies can also register patients for vaccinations if they did not sign-up via a call centre, their doctor, or local health authority. Despite the administration of COVID-19 vaccinations not being permitted in pharmacies, ČLNK supports legislative action to change this practice.

(Source: Česká Lékařnická Komora, January 2021)

Germany



Number of pharmacies drop for the third year in a row

According to a survey led by ABDA, the Federal Union of German Associations of Pharmacists, the number of pharmacies in Germany fell by 322 to 18,753 at the end of 2020. This is the third year in a row that the decline represents more than 300 pharmacies. In 2020, the number of self-employed pharmacists running a pharmacy business with up to three branches also decreased by 363 to 14,110.

The density of pharmacies in Germany is currently 23 pharmacies per 100,000 inhabitants, which is below the EU average of 32 pharmacies per 100,000 inhabitants. The Federal Association hopes that the “on-site pharmacy strengthening law” (VOASG) passed last autumn, as well as the introduction of e-prescriptions, will help anchor new pharmaceutical services, improve patient care, and enhance the future prospects of pharmacies.

(Source: ABDA, February 2021)

France



Pharmacists to support the delivery of the AstraZeneca vaccine

On February 2, public health body Haute Autorite de la Sante (HAS) recommended that pharmacists who have previously trained to administer the flu vaccine should be allowed to prescribe and vaccinate against COVID-19. However, the order allowing this implementation has yet to be published.

In the meantime, pharmacies will receive stocks of the AstraZeneca vaccine, which they will distribute to General Practitioners (GPs) who are willing to vaccinate eligible patients. Initially, the vaccination will only be available for people aged between 50 and 64 years with at least one co-morbidity factor, as well as healthcare professionals under 65 years of age.

(Source: The Connexion, February 2021)

Turkey



Pharmacists question the use of inadequate medical supplements

The Turkish Pharmacists Association (TEB) has called on celebrities and social media influencers to stop advertising herbal products, vitamins, minerals, and food supplements without providing the appropriate medical information. While the association understands that the public wants to protect its health, it believes that influencers should not exploit this trend, explaining that excessive and inadequate consumption of supplements can have irreversible health consequences and may lead to death.

The association also highlights that more effort needs to be made in order to improve health literacy alongside public health prevention. A 2018 study from the Ministry of Health showed that 7 in 10 people had low levels of health literacy.

(Source: Türk Eczacıları Birliği, February 2021)

Romania



Romanian pharmacies' revenues are on the rise

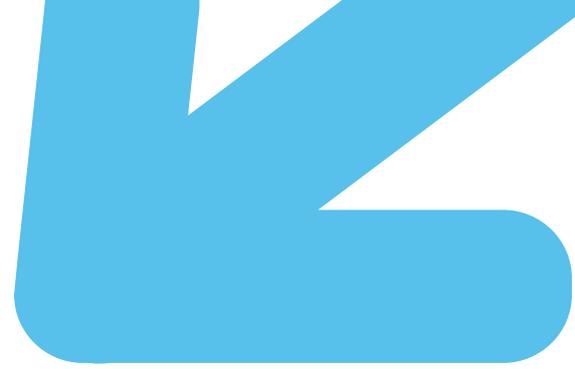
A new study conducted by Coface Romania, which focuses on the retail trade of pharmaceutical products, indicated an 8% increase in revenues of pharmaceutical retailers in 2019. The study aggregated the financial data of approximately 4,000 companies and shows a low degree of concentration in the market, with the 10 most influential players only having 33% of the market share.

Furthermore, the study reports that Romanians allocated 5% of their monthly income for the purchase of medicines in 2019, and this share rose in 2020, despite the decrease of sales during the pandemic. The average monthly expenses allocated for the purchase of medicines for human use also increased by 14% in the first two quarters of 2020, compared to the same period in 2019.

(Source: News.Ro, January 2021)



2021
Bringing European
pharmacists closer together
Since 1999



22 Years of the EPF

For the last formal meeting as the European Pharmacy Forum, we asked our President, **Paulo Duarte**, our inaugural President **Mike Smith** and the Working Chairs for their reflections of EPF and their proudest moments over the past twenty-two years...



Mike Smith

Inaugural EPF President

I was honoured to be invited by Ornella to be the inaugural president of the EPF when it was founded in 1999.

The first meeting was held in an airport hotel at London Heathrow. It was a little challenging as the interpreters arrived late (they were not used again) and Ornella and myself were left in a conference room with 20 delegates from the founding countries.

Fortunately Ornella is multilingual and she gave me great support!

It was the start of a group that was about getting to know each other – recognising the differences in health systems between mainland Europe and the UK - and building trust and understanding.

Over the years, it has developed into a group of highly influential and motivated pharmacists. I would like to start by quoting the EPF mission statement which I presented in Portugal 2007:

“ To support the pharmacist profession through the engagement of selected representatives from the participating countries and the tackling of key challenges and opportunities ”

The EPF Mission Statement 2007

I am proud to say that the forum has done much to fulfil this mission and here are some of EPF's key achievements:

- Shared best practice from the member countries
- Changed the attitudes to the development of new services
- Published the EPF White Paper (2015) to outline a clear vision for the future of pharmacy in Europe
- Prepared EPF members to influence the agenda within their own associations – to influence and develop the local pharmacy market agenda – they have done this!
- Developing campaigns – for example diabetes, smoking cessation, vaccination and diagnostic services
- Share innovations in service development with the use of technology.

The EPF became an international network and achieved visibility with strong brand awareness.

It has done much to develop independent community pharmacy across Europe by building strategic partnerships with public and private entities.

This has been facilitated by inviting important speakers from the pharmaceutical industry, local government and professional associations.

By taking the meetings to each of the trading countries it has really helped to understand the different challenges and opportunities.

I have been asked to recount my proudest moment of the EPF – there are so many – but I guess the thing I am most proud of is being a member of this unique forum for 20 years.

In closing, I have to thank Francesca Geddes for her outstanding team of interpreters, Gianluca Masini for his support, and my colleague Tricia Kennerley who has brought so much to the group.

My final words have to be for Ornella, whose unfailing support for the forum and for our profession have taken independent pharmacy throughout Europe to a new level.

Ornella is of course a pharmacist herself and she is an inspiration to us all – thank you so much, Ornella.

Our Working Chairs reflect on their proudest moments of the EPF:

The experience of these years with EPF has been exceptional!

Learning more about the world of pharmacy through the contributions of my colleagues, the external speakers and Dr Barra has been a unique, unforgettable opportunity.

The most satisfying moment was the creation of the White Paper on pharmacy and its presentation to the institutions in Brussels. An event that indicated a decisive path for the future of pharmacy.

See you soon,

Marcello Perego

In March 2015 we presented the white paper of the European Pharmacist Forum in Brussels. A few months later we introduced it with the main focus on vaccination by local pharmacies to our colleagues in Germany, to the ABDA and also at the German Ministry of Health. It took another five years before the first German pharmacies started flu vaccination pilot projects in Autumn 2020. Endurance and the support of our European colleagues pays off!

Walter Taeschner

All these years within the EPF and as a member of the Steering Committee have allowed me to meet our colleagues from different countries, share the vision of other pharmacy professionals and learn from our experiences in working groups.

A great friendship was born between us and for me the major element of our achievements was the writing of the White Paper, which helped us to promote the role of pharmacists in our countries. And thanks to this, in this very exceptional period of the pandemic, we will be able to put ourselves at the service of our fellow citizens in France, and in other countries, by being involved in the vaccination against COVID-19 to help defeat this disease.

Thanks to Ms Barra for all this and her ability to communicate her enthusiasm to transform today's difficulties into tomorrow's opportunities.

Philippe Gaertner

My proudest EPF moment was when we had our meeting in Lisbon, which took place at the same time as the inauguration of Alliance Healthcare Portugal's new warehouse on the 15th of March 2017. That moment symbolises to me the importance of the partnership between Portuguese pharmacies and WBA, and the lessons learned from independent pharmacists across Europe.

Paulo Duarte



Paulo Duarte

Current EPF President

EPF has been one of the most important experiences in my life. I'm thankful to Ornella and WBA for the creation of this unique Forum of discussion. To be chosen by my colleagues as EPF President was an honour and privilege, especially during the 20th anniversary.

Understanding the different perspectives of the role of pharmacies in the healthcare system across Europe made us reach one conclusion: despite the reality in each of our countries, we all have the same dreams, the same threats, and the same competences close to the communities we serve.

Ornella and WBA gave us all the tools to make a difference in our countries, with the best interest of our patients. Ornella has shown me the importance of partnerships. I have also learned that it's possible to cooperate in all levels of the value chain of medicines and healthcare products, to the benefit of all. Most importantly, I have learned that it's possible to compete in the market whilst being a strong and cooperative partner.

Throughout the past twenty-two years of the EPF, we have heard from and collaborated with the top thinkers and doers in the healthcare system and pharmaceutical world, learning with the best of the best. Our discussions in the workshops were also one of the more important moments in our meetings and the EPF White Paper is one of the most significant achievements of our EPF legacy.

All of our discussions bring us to one conclusion. To make pharmacies the healthcare provider most valued by people, we need the right balance between our professional capabilities and the perceived value of our service by patients, payers, regulators and other healthcare providers – just like the right dose of medicine for the right patient.

The COVID-19 pandemic showed like never before the value added by pharmacists, as well as the value added by pharmacies to the healthcare system. In just a few months, we saw society break down barriers that had previously seemed impossible to overcome. There is no better way to end this journey: pharmacies will emerge stronger after this pandemic because we have shown society the very best of what we are and what we can deliver. We were always open, close to our patients, and solving their healthcare problems.

Thank you all!

Highlights from the latest EPF Seminar, 2020

The latest European Pharmacists Forum took place on 30 November 2020. Bringing together leading pharmacists across Europe, the meeting was an opportunity to reflect on key issues affecting the pharmacy sector, and the impact of COVID-19 on the profession.

Lord Mark Malloch-Brown opened by acknowledging the impact of COVID-19. He said the economic recovery following the second wave of COVID-19 will be slower, leading to mass unemployment, public debt, and a frustrated younger generation. For the healthcare sector, expenditure, efficacy of local systems, and the limits of a nationalistic approach have been brought to question. Economic nationalism is growing further, particularly affecting pharmaceutical manufacturing, while China has become a strong competitor for Western countries. Consumer behaviour now favours e-commerce, sustainable sourcing, and high environmental standards.

Luis Panadero (Spain) explained how independent pharmacies offered medicine distribution services, reduced hospital admissions, and provided COVID-19 testing during the pandemic. However, financial support and training are needed for pharmacies to continue offering increased services. Mr Panadero hopes independent pharmacies will be able to vaccinate against COVID-19, despite opposition.

Bahadır Eren (Turkey) highlighted pharmacy's important role on the frontline during the healthcare crisis by offering longer opening hours, home deliveries, and free masks. While Turkish pharmacists want fair remuneration for providing multiple services, they are preparing to launch a COVID-19 vaccination campaign.

Florina Bonifate (Romania) said independent pharmacists are adopting many initiatives, including COVID-19 testing in rural areas. Alphega Romania has also accelerated their digitalisation by launching a product reservation system, and post-pandemic, digitalisation will be vital in allowing pharmacies to offer more services and strengthen their market position.

Wolfgang Kempf (Germany) reminded members that the EPF White Paper had already highlighted that pharmacists should have a role in vaccinations. Pharmacists should use this as inspiration to ensure they



can be involved in the COVID-19 vaccination campaign. **Juan Guerra** agreed and called for a firmer stance in defending the rights of pharmacists to deliver the COVID-19 vaccine.

Philippe Gaertner (France) explained that community pharmacies have a role to play in administering COVID-19 vaccinations. French pharmacists administered over 400,000 flu vaccinations in one day, proving their strength.

Arno van Tilborg (The Netherlands) said medicine lockers were used extensively during the pandemic, enabling patients to collect their medicine securely at any time. As well as providing healthcare advice via telephone and video calls, all independent pharmacies offered delivery services. While COVID-19 testing in pharmacies may be possible during 2021, van Tilborg expressed fears that medicine shortages could get worse, and that pharmacists are not allowed to administer COVID-19 vaccinations.

Jiří Hromada (Czech Republic) noted that pharmacies have been the most accessible point of healthcare and have not entailed additional costs for the national healthcare system. Pharmacies are also offering new services such as home delivery. He added that the Czech government has not yet authorised community pharmacies to administer COVID-19 vaccines.

Mike Smith lamented that pharmacists were not allowed to provide vaccinations in a number of countries. **Razvan Prisada** said Romanian pharmacies will administer the COVID-19 vaccine, while **João Silveira** said that cooperation between doctors and pharmacists was essential to ensuring the

latter is legitimised as a vaccine provider.

Paulo Duarte asserted that pharmacists must defend their role without causing conflict in the healthcare chain.

Ornella Barra said Walgreens Boots Alliance has been able to weather the storm of 2020 and can be optimistic about the Group's robust cashflow, excellent customer loyalty, and improving online sales. As well as highlighting the positive development of No7 products, which are sold in Walgreens stores, large department stores, and Walmart, Ms Barra also mentioned the launch of the myWalgreens loyalty programme, as well as the approval of WBA and McKesson's joint venture on the German market.

While the arrival of a new competitor, Amazon Pharmacy, cannot be ignored, Ms Barra emphasised that it does not have the relationships and expertise of brick-and-mortar pharmacies, and further reiterated the excellent work of community pharmacies during the healthcare crisis.

Juan Guerra shared an update on Alloga UK. As well as working with the government on COVID-19 logistics, it has increased its storage capacity with a new warehouse that will accommodate growth and post-Brexit stock. Alloga Spain also increased its facilities in Borox. Despite news that the Alphega European Convention has been postponed until 2022 due to the pandemic, Alphega UK recently launched a new app to provide digital solutions and preferential rates. Alliance Healthcare Netherlands has become the first wholesaler to sign the nation's Green Deal programme, while Alliance Healthcare UK has committed to reducing single-use plastic by 60% in three years.

Ornella Barra added that her commendation at the Responsible Business Awards 2020 recognises the global commitment of WBA employees, and emphasised WBA's inclusion in the Dow Jones Sustainability Index. Ms Barra closed by saying the impact of COVID-19 will continue to be felt in 2021.



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