

## Community pharmacists have a crucial role to play in responsible over-the-counter pain management

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The COVID-19 pandemic has led to more people taking responsibility for managing their own health and seeking information in order to do so.

In 2019, FIP and the Global Self-Care Federation issued a joint [Statement of Policy](#) on responsible and effective self-care, and this includes the management of pain.

Pharmacists, as trusted healthcare professionals who are most accessible to the public, are the first (and often preferred) source of reliable, evidence-based advice and care. Seeking support from pharmacists on over-the-counter pain management is highly beneficial and recommended. Pharmacists oversee the responsible use of analgesics by:

- Making sure that analgesics are only supplied if a need is established;
- Ensuring that the most appropriate product is selected;
- Counselling on effective and safe dosing and administration of analgesics;
- Checking for and preventing interactions of analgesics with other medicines a person is taking;
- Contributing to safety by recording supply of analgesics in patients' medical records (in countries with national patient records that pharmacists can add to);
- Advising on the safe storage of analgesics;
- Supporting people in pain with information on different means of pain management;

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- Recognising conditions that require referral to a fellow healthcare professional;
- Helping to detect diseases at an early stage so that early treatment can improve outcomes;
- Preventing misuse of and addiction to analgesics; and
- Educating on the safe disposal of analgesics and accepting unwanted and/or expired analgesics for safe disposal.

In addition, transition of care is a time when patients are particularly at risk of medication errors. As medication experts on the healthcare team, pharmacists play a crucial role in ensuring the appropriate and safe use of medicines, including analgesics, for patients moving between healthcare settings, collaborating with other healthcare professionals to help optimise medication regimens and improve care. As patient-care advocates, community pharmacists play an important role in facilitating seamless care.

These actions, routinely performed every day by community pharmacists, ensure access to effective medication, optimise quality of life and health outcomes for people with pain, improve safety for patients and others, and support the sustainability of our healthcare systems.

FIP recommends that community pharmacists, who work at the hearts of communities, are the key healthcare professionals to go to for advice on over-the-counter pain management.