

Sustainability in health care: The role of the pharmacist and pharmacy practice

Report from an international
roundtable

2023



FIP Development Goals



International
Pharmaceutical
Federation

Colophon

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Acknowledgements

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The Haleon logo consists of the word "HALEON" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. A horizontal green bar is positioned behind the letter "E".

About this report

The connection between the health of the planet and that of its people is undeniable, particularly with respect to air pollution, which is known to cause and contribute to almost nine million deaths per year, and affects nearly all of us.¹ There is an urgent need for action to protect both people and the planet and to address air pollution as a direct threat to individual and community health.

Pharmacists are key to managing respiratory care and activating practical change among patients in their communities. They can improve patient health outcomes by enabling timely diagnosis through early screening mechanisms, optimising medicines selection, and providing education and counselling to patients. They can also proactively support patients in adopting preventive measures against air pollution so that they can breathe better (respiratory wellness).

Over the past four years, the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) and Haleon's scientific initiative, The Clean Breathing Institute (TCBI), have been partnering on initiatives to equip pharmacists to support their communities and peer colleagues by leading the dialogue on air pollution and health topics as well as influencing public policy agendas on personal and population-level interventions.

As a part of this partnership, FIP and TCBI have convened global key opinion leaders across the pharmaceutical profession to discuss and map out some interventions and services required to support pharmacists and community pharmacies to achieve sustainability in pharmacy.

A roundtable was held virtually on 21 February 2023. Its key objectives were:

1. To identify and map out educational programmes and evaluation processes to support the pharmacy workforce;
2. To understand and prioritise strategies pharmacy practices can adopt to support social, environmental and economic sustainability;
3. To identify opportunities for pharmacy to advocate and contribute to the development and advancement of policies on air pollution and health; and
4. To understand the social impact of pharmacy interventions in sustainability and how to effectively measure this.

Seventeen global experts were convened to answer the following questions:

1. What are the measures pharmacists can take and implement within their communities to include people who are excluded from accessing information on mitigating issues arising from air pollution?
2. What educational or health programmes can be put in place to equip pharmacists to be strong advocates for change?
3. How can these be implemented and evaluated?
4. What practical steps can be taken to ensure that pharmacists are enabled and empowered to support social, environmental, and economic sustainability?
5. How can the impact of these steps be measured to create a clear evidence base for them?

Participants addressed the four roundtable questions in two parts using virtual breakout rooms, convening together between them to share key insights. The roundtable was recorded (under consent) and the transcripts and emerging notes were reviewed, organised and then mapped into themes. This report summarises the insights from the roundtable into themes that can inform the development of sustainability in pharmacy.

Roundtable participants

Experts on sustainability in pharmacy were identified through desk research and recommendations. FIP member organisations were also represented through their sustainability leads.

It should be noted that the views expressed during the roundtable are those of the individuals based on their expertise and experience. They do not represent the views of member organisations or FIP policy or positions, although they may build on existing positions and statements.

Participants		
Rania Al Dweik	Assistant professor of public health, Abu Dhabi University	UAE
Leticia Caligaris	Secretary, Pharmaceutical Association of Uruguay Observer to the FIP Community Pharmacy Section Executive Committee	Uruguay
Esa Chen	Research fellow, Centre for Health Economics, Monash Business School	Australia
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Osama Mohamed Ibrahim	Associate professor, College of Pharmacy, University of Sharjah	UAE
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1. Empowering the role of pharmacists in sustainability

Chapter 1 describes five key themes that have emerged from the participants while discussing the first two questions.

1. Importance of the role of pharmacists in sustainability

The role of pharmacists in sustainability is an important theme that emerged from the roundtable. It highlights the need for pharmacists to take a proactive role in promoting sustainability in the pharmacy profession. Participants' comments show that pharmacists can play an important role in educating the public and other healthcare professionals about sustainable practices.

For example, participants discussed the need for pharmacists to take a leadership role in promoting sustainable practices. One participant stated:

"I think pharmacists are in a unique position to help promote sustainability because we are trusted healthcare professionals."

This emphasises the importance of the pharmacist's role as a trusted healthcare professional and the potential influence that they can have in promoting sustainable practices.

Pharmacists also have an important role in educating other healthcare professionals about sustainable practices. One participant stated:

"We need to work together to educate other healthcare professionals about sustainable practices, not just pharmacists."

This highlights the importance of collaboration between healthcare professionals to promote sustainable practices. It also emphasises the need for pharmacists to take a leadership role in educating other healthcare professionals about sustainable practices.

In addition, pharmacists have an important role in educating the public about sustainable practices. One participant stated:

"Pharmacists are trusted healthcare professionals, and we can use this trust to educate the public about sustainable practices."

This emphasises the potential influence that pharmacists can have in educating the public about sustainable practices. It also highlights the need for pharmacists to take a proactive role in promoting sustainable practices to the public.

2. Need for continuing education and training

A second important theme that emerged from the roundtable is the need for ongoing education and training of pharmacists. As the healthcare landscape continues to evolve and the impact of air pollution and sustainability become ever more relevant, it is crucial that pharmacists stay up to date with the latest developments and best practices in sustainability, climate change, and other related areas. Ongoing education and training programmes can help to ensure

that pharmacists are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to provide high-quality care while minimising the environmental impact of their practice.

One example from the roundtable that supports this theme is the discussion around the need to raise awareness among pharmacists about the importance of medicines disposal and its impact on carbon footprints. Participants noted that not all countries have a specific strategy for medicines disposal, and not all community pharmacists are aware of proper disposal methods. They suggested that through ongoing education and training, pharmacists can be taught about the proper ways to dispose of medicines and how this affects carbon footprints. Such training could include learning about the lifecycle of a medicine and its impact on the environment. Pharmacists should then be able to assess medicines disposal and how it affects carbon footprints, and this could have a significant impact on sustainability and climate change.

Another important issue pharmacists should know about is implementing sustainable practices in the pharmacy. Participants noted that sustainable practices can include reducing energy consumption, minimising waste, and using environmentally friendly products. However, implementing these practices can be challenging, and ongoing education and training could help pharmacists learn about the latest techniques and tools for sustainability.

For example, pharmacists could attend webinars or lectures to learn about energy-saving practices or new technologies for reducing waste. By staying up to date on the latest developments in sustainability, pharmacists can be better equipped to implement sustainable practices in their pharmacy and reduce their environmental impact.

Ongoing education and training of pharmacists is crucial for ensuring that they have the knowledge and skills needed to provide high-quality care while minimising the environmental impact of their practice. If investment were made in ongoing education and training, pharmacists could play a critical role in promoting sustainability and reducing the environmental impact of health care.

3. Importance of interdisciplinary collaboration and partnerships

A third theme that emerged is the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration and developing partnerships in promoting sustainability in pharmacy. Participants acknowledged the need to work collaboratively with other healthcare professionals and stakeholders to achieve the common goal of sustainable healthcare. One participant stated:

"We need to collaborate with other healthcare professionals, such as physicians, nurses, and environmental health specialists, to create a holistic approach to sustainable health care."

This highlights the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration in achieving sustainable healthcare. By working with other healthcare professionals, pharmacists can leverage their knowledge and expertise to develop comprehensive sustainability initiatives that address the needs of the entire healthcare system.

Another participant stated:

"We need to partner with our patients and communities to promote sustainable healthcare practices."

This highlights the importance of engaging patients and communities in sustainable healthcare practices. By partnering with patients and communities, pharmacists can educate them on the importance of sustainability and empower them to make informed decisions about their health and the environment. This could be achieved through community outreach programmes, health promotion initiatives and patient education resources, for example.

Interdisciplinary collaborations and partnerships are essential to promote sustainable healthcare in pharmacy. By working together with other healthcare professionals, stakeholders, patients and communities, pharmacists can create a more comprehensive approach to sustainability that addresses the needs of all stakeholders.

4. Importance of monitoring and evaluation

The importance of monitoring and evaluation was a recurring theme too. It was emphasised that monitoring and evaluating the impact of sustainability initiatives is crucial to ensuring their success and continued improvement.

Participants discussed how sustainability initiatives must be evaluated to determine their effectiveness. The following statement highlights this point:

“Once we have an initiative in place, we need to evaluate it to see if it’s having the intended effect. This is crucial to ensure that we are making progress towards our sustainability goals.”

Participants went on to discuss the importance of using data to evaluate initiatives and make informed decisions about future sustainability efforts. They also discussed how monitoring and evaluation can help identify areas for improvement. The following statement illustrates this point:

“By regularly monitoring and evaluating our sustainability initiatives, we can identify areas where we need to improve and make changes to ensure that we are having the greatest impact.”

The roundtable also discussed the importance of using stakeholder feedback to inform the evaluation process and agreed that revisiting both policies and standards is an important mechanism to ensure ongoing sustainability. One participant said:

“After implementing sustainability initiatives, it’s important to revisit policies and standards to ensure that they are still effective and making progress towards sustainability goals.”

In conclusion, monitoring and evaluation is critical to the success of sustainability initiatives in the pharmacy sector. The participants discussed describe how monitoring and evaluation can help assess the effectiveness of sustainability initiatives, identify areas for improvement and inform policy revisions. By incorporating monitoring and evaluation into sustainability efforts, pharmacy professionals can ensure that they are making progress towards their sustainability goals and making a positive impact on the environment and community.

5. Utilising technology

The use of technology is increasingly important in various aspects of pharmacy practice, and this includes ways to promote sustainability. Participants highlighted the need for utilising technology to promote awareness and education, as well as monitoring and evaluating progress towards sustainability goals.

One example mentioned was the use of software for measuring a carbon footprint. A participant noted:

“The pharmacist can play a role in this one. They can assess the disposal of the medication, and how this affects the carbon footprint and then affects climate change.”

This demonstrates the importance of using technology to accurately measure and track progress towards sustainability goals, as well as to identify areas for improvement.

Another example of the importance of technology is the use of electronic health records (EHRs) in promoting sustainable practices. One participant said:

“We have to start now from the prescription. The prescription is the beginning of the story. It’s the source of everything.”

By utilising EHRs, pharmacists can access information about a patient’s medication history and make informed decisions about medication management, including reducing waste and promoting the use of sustainable products.

The use of technology is essential in promoting sustainable pharmacy practice. It allows for greater access to education and awareness, as well as accurate monitoring and evaluation of progress towards sustainability goals.

2. Practical steps for pharmacy

Chapter 2 describes three key themes that emerged during participants' discussion of the second two roundtable questions. It is worth noting that the need for ongoing education and training (also of pharmacy technicians and the wider pharmacy team) and utilising technology were further discussed and emphasised by the participants as key practice. The following three themes provide insights into other specific issues.

1. Importance of measuring impact

Measuring impact is a crucial aspect of any project or initiative because it allows for a systematic assessment of whether or not the intended outcomes have been achieved. This involves evaluating the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and sustainability of a project or initiative. In the context of pharmacy practice, measuring impact is especially important because pharmacists play a critical role in patient care and medication management, and their interventions can have a significant impact on patient outcomes.

One example of the importance of measuring impact in pharmacy practice is the need to establish clear goals to measure the impact of pharmacy interventions. One of the participants noted:

"We need to set clear goals and measure our interventions against those goals so that we can determine if we are making a difference."

This underscores the importance of setting measurable goals and objectives that are aligned with the desired outcomes of the intervention. Without clear goals, it is difficult to determine its effectiveness.

Another example is the need to evaluate the impact of pharmacy education programmes. A participant noted:

"We need to evaluate the impact of our education programmes to ensure that they are meeting the needs of the profession and the patients we serve."

This highlights the importance of evaluating the effectiveness of education programmes to ensure that they are achieving their intended outcomes. By measuring the impact of education programmes, it is possible to identify areas for improvement and to ensure that the programmes are meeting the needs of the profession and patients.

Measuring impact is a crucial aspect of pharmacy practice, as it allows for a systematic assessment of whether or not intended outcomes have been achieved. Participants' contributions highlight the importance of setting clear goals and objectives, evaluating the effectiveness of education programmes, and implementing interventions before measuring their impact. By measuring impact, pharmacists can ensure that their interventions are meeting the needs of patients and the profession. This is an issue that is more widely applicable to other areas beyond sustainability.

2. Overcoming challenges faced in implementing pharmacy practice change

Participants highlighted several challenges facing pharmacy practice, ranging from inadequate training and education to limited scope of practice and inadequate resources. These challenges pose a significant barrier to achieving optimal patient outcomes and improving the quality of care delivered in the pharmacy.

One of the key challenges facing pharmacy practice is the limited scope of practice for pharmacists. This means that pharmacists are often unable to perform tasks beyond dispensing medicines, such as providing comprehensive medication management or conducting physical assessments. As one participant noted:

“Pharmacy is a profession that is evolving, but the evolution is not always keeping up with the needs of the population.”

Another challenge facing pharmacy practice is that training and education provided to pharmacists can sometimes be perceived as inadequate. Participants noted that the training provided to pharmacists in some countries still needs development ~~inadequate~~, with a focus on clinical care rather than on dispensing. As one participant noted:

“We need to empower pharmacists to deliver more than just dispensing. We need to provide them with training and education so that they can provide comprehensive care to patients.”

In addition, the alleged challenge of inadequate resources in many pharmacy settings was identified. This can impact the ability of pharmacists to deliver optimal care to patients and includes limited staffing, inadequate technology and limited access to patient health records. As one participant noted:

“Pharmacists need to have access to patient records in order to provide effective care but, in many settings, this is not possible due to limited resources.”

Finally, the roundtable discussion highlighted the challenge of limited recognition and respect for the role of pharmacists in health care. Participants noted that in some countries, pharmacists are still seen as “pill counters” rather than as clinical care providers, which can impact their ability to practise to their full scope. A participant said:

“We need to raise awareness of the value that pharmacists can bring to health care and ensure that they are recognised and respected for their role in improving patient outcomes.”

In summary, several challenges facing pharmacy practice were highlighted, including limited scope of practice, less than optimal training and education, insufficient resources and limited recognition. Addressing these challenges will require collaboration between pharmacists, healthcare providers, policymakers and other stakeholders to ensure that pharmacists are empowered to deliver high-quality care to patients.

3. Environmental health and its relation to pharmacy

Globally, the impact of environmental factors on health is a growing concern. The roundtable briefly touched on this issue and highlighted the potential role that pharmacists could play in addressing environmental health issues. Air pollution is one of the major environmental health concerns that impact people’s health, especially in urban areas.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), outdoor air pollution is responsible for approximately 4.2 million deaths each year. Participants highlighted the impact of air pollution on the health of people during the COVID-19 lockdown.

They noted that air pollution is an environmental factor that is easily measured. It is therefore important for pharmacists to have a basic understanding of environmental health issues and the role that they can play in addressing them. Pharmacists are in a unique position to contribute to environmental health, given their knowledge of drugs and chemicals, and their effects on human health.

Pharmacists can educate patients and the public about the health effects of environmental pollution and provide information on ways to reduce exposure. They can also advocate environmental policies that promote clean air and water, such as promoting alternative transportation options and supporting green energy sources.

Participants also suggested that pharmacists could potentially be involved in measuring the impact of environmental policies on health outcomes. For example, pharmacists could measure the levels of air pollution in their local communities and compare them to health outcomes, such as rates of respiratory diseases.

The potential role of pharmacists in addressing environmental health issues is an area that requires further exploration. However, participants emphasised the role that pharmacists could play in addressing environmental health issues, particularly with respect to air pollution. With the increasing focus on environmental health issues globally, it is important for pharmacists to be aware of their potential role in addressing these issues and to advocate policies that promote environmental health.

3. Recommendations

Combining all themes, several points might be considered FIP priority action areas for pharmacy organisations, and individual pharmacists, as well as for FIP to support pharmacy globally. These are:

1. **Advocating the expansion of pharmacists' scope of practice** — Pharmacy organisations should advocate the expansion of pharmacists' scope of practice, with a focus on increasing pharmacist-led services and improving access to care in underserved communities.
2. **Embracing technology and digital health** — There is a need for pharmacy organisations to embrace technology and digital health solutions to improve patient outcomes and enhance the practice of pharmacy. This includes implementing electronic health records, leveraging telehealth technologies and integrating technology into medication management systems.
3. **Addressing environmental health issues** — Pharmacists can play an important role in addressing environmental health issues, such as air pollution and climate change. Pharmacy organisations should prioritise environmental health initiatives and promote the role of pharmacists in these efforts.
4. **Measuring the impact of pharmacy practice** — There is a need for pharmacy organisations to prioritise the measurement of the impact of pharmacy practice on patient outcomes and population health. This includes investing in research and evaluation to quantify the value of pharmacy practice and using these findings to inform policy and practice. Data and intelligence from pharmacy practice are therefore important, and through the FIP Global Pharmaceutical Observatory (GPO), FIP can support members measure impact.
5. **Collaborating with other healthcare professionals and stakeholders** — To advance pharmacy practice and improve patient outcomes, pharmacy organisations should prioritise collaboration with other healthcare professionals and stakeholders. This includes building partnerships with physicians, nurses and other healthcare providers, as well as engaging with policymakers, payers and patients to promote the value of pharmacy practice.
6. **Focusing on patient-centred care** — Pharmacy organisations should prioritise the advancement of patient-centred care, with a focus on developing and implementing tools and strategies to improve communication with patients and promote shared decision-making. This includes enhancing the role of pharmacists in collaborative care models, as well as investing in education and training programmes to support pharmacists in these roles.

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