

Calls for immediate Appointment of a Chief Pharmaceutical Officer at Pharmacists AGM



27 April 2024

The Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) has reiterated its call for the Minister for Health to promptly appoint a Chief Pharmaceutical Officer (CPO) within his department. This call was overwhelmingly supported at the Association's AGM, where a motion on the subject was debated and unanimously approved.

In addressing this motion Liam Butler Vice-President of the IPU's Pharmacy Contractors Committee emphasised the crucial role of community pharmacists in providing local healthcare. He highlighted that the IPU has consistently advocated for the role of a CPO stressing that without this key position the full potential of pharmacy cannot be realised.

"The appointment of a CPO would ensure that the pharmaceutical care of our population and medicine supply is consistently addressed at the most senior levels of the health system. It would also facilitate the development of a strategic vision for community-based pharmacy care,

ultimately enhancing patient services.”

Despite progress in expanding pharmacist roles, the absence of a CPO undermines a proper vision for pharmacy services. This is evident in the lack of parity with other Chief Officers in the Department of Health, such as a Chief Medical Officer and the Chief Nursing Officer. To advocate effectively for pharmacists and maximise their contributions to the healthcare system, pharmacy representation at the highest levels is imperative, as is seen in neighbouring jurisdictions like England, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

“The absence of an Irish CPO places us at odds with modern healthcare systems. Jurisdictions that have a CPO have clearly demonstrated their value. For example, pharmacists in Scotland operate according to a clear national pharmacy strategy which is integrated into the wider health service. Through this simple but effective structure, pharmacists’ specialist knowledge in medicines is utilised to best effect for people’s health and well-being. We need to take a similar approach here.

Community pharmacies face ongoing challenges including medicine shortages, which require a coordinated national response. A CPO would help to address this through formulating and implementing initiatives to tackle the problem including a concerted national action plan.”

In conclusion, Mr Butler urged the Minister for Health to urgently appoint a Chief Pharmaceutical Officer within the Department of Health, a crucial position integral to most developed healthcare systems.”