

IPU strongly endorses statement of European colleagues on vital role of pharmacy during COVID crisis

23 February 2021: The Irish Pharmacy Union has strongly endorsed the Pharmaceutical Group of European Union (PGEU) statement that community pharmacy has been an indispensable element of the COVID-19 response.

IPU Secretary General Darragh O'Loughlin says it is welcome that PGEU specifically cites the role Irish pharmacies will play in mass vaccination campaigns for COVID-19.

In the statement published by the British Medical Journal **Alain Delgutte**, *PGEU President*, and **Duarte Santos**, *PGEU Past President*, say the *COVID-19 pandemic* "has taught Europe's healthcare systems several important lessons. One of them is the need for effective organisation and deployment of primary healthcare to ensure the continuity of care within our communities. In this ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the network of pharmacies near people's homes is playing a vital role in supporting local communities."

Mr O'Loughlin said, "We cannot endorse this statement more forcefully. Irish pharmacists have more than stepped up to the plate in ensuring our communities continued to receive vital face-to-face healthcare for the past year while many other healthcare services were unavailable. Our commitment to our patients is again to the fore as we work to ensure that pharmacies are enabled to play an important role in the COVID-19 vaccination campaign.

"It is also very useful to have a European perspective on how pharmacists' role in supporting people could be extended further. As my colleagues in PGEU state, many European countries have introduced changes in legislation to expand the role of pharmacists and have also secured additional funds to empower pharmacists in their vital work on the frontline against COVID-19.

"Similar to other countries, Irish pharmacists can now renew repeat prescriptions for medications and the electronic transfer of prescriptions to pharmacies has been enabled. However, we can do more and must follow the example of other countries. For example, in Scotland, pharmacists have been empowered through the extension of the Minor Ailment Service and increased access to Emergency Care Summary Data."

Mr O'Loughlin concluded by saying that he echoes the words of the PGEU statement, which say, "Amid these challenges it is vital to maximise the use of community pharmacy practice to meet patients' needs and maintain continuity of services. Community pharmacy has demonstrated its value for patients and healthcare systems during this crisis and is ready to further expand this

contribution as part of sustainable collaboration models with other healthcare professions in the community.”