

IPU Welcomes Government Approval to Further Expand the Role of Pharmacists and Introduce Pharmacist Prescribing



16 April 2024: The Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) has welcomed the statement from the Minister for Health that he has received government approval to proceed with the drafting of a further amendment to the Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill. This amendment will lay the groundwork for the introduction of pharmacist prescribing and for an enhanced role for pharmacists, which is good news for patients.

Under the amendment proposed by Health Minister, Stephen Donnelly TD, patients will soon be able to access certain medications directly from their pharmacy without the need for a GP visit for a prescription. This should facilitate pharmacists supplying the contraceptive pill through a structured consultation. In addition, to combat the growing problem of medicine shortages, pharmacists will be permitted to substitute medicines that are therapeutic equivalents when a

prescribed medication is unavailable.

Pharmacists are in discussions with the Department of Health to ensure that all the correct enablers are in place to facilitate these services for patients. The IPU is confident agreement can be reached on these critical enablers so that enhanced patient care and accessibility can be realised and pressure can be reduced across our healthcare services.

Tom Murray, incoming IPU President, said, “Community pharmacists stand as the most readily accessible clinicians within a person’s healthcare team. Their potential to prescribe directly is eagerly anticipated and will directly benefit patient outcomes. Successful delivery of this role requires pharmacists to be enabled and resourced correctly, community pharmacists are collaborating with Department of Health officials to ensure a successful outcome for patients and the healthcare system.”

Concluding, Mr. Murray said, “Pharmacists are highly trained professionals capable of providing a broad range of additional services. This expansion of their role promises to benefit both the wider healthcare system and patients alike. We welcome the ongoing engagement with the Department of Health, and anticipate the opportunity to contribute to the rollout and implementation of new programs. We look forward to the Minister addressing our annual Pharmacy Conference next week as we continue our efforts to enable community pharmacies to enhance patient care outcomes.”

The IPU has tirelessly advocated on behalf of patients for the introduction of these measures for many years. Pharmacists are highly trained and skilled healthcare professionals, and their extensive knowledge and professional competence have long been an untapped resource. These service expansions will help support patients to access treatments quicker and easier in their local communities. Irish community pharmacists can deliver the right level of care, at the right time, and in the right place for the Irish public.

ENDS

