

Pharmacies Should Play Central Role in any Booster Campaign for COVID Vaccines



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GPs already significantly overstretched

Pharmacists have administered 320,000 vaccines so far and offer over 1,000 vaccination locations

18 October 2021 The Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) is urging NIAC and the HSE to enlist the nationwide capacity of community pharmacies for the impending COVID-19 booster vaccinations campaign. With details of the booster campaign expected to be announced imminently, the IPU has said that pharmacies have a proven track record and should play a central role in all ongoing and future vaccination campaigns.

Pharmacies commenced offering COVID-19 vaccines in June and to date have administered almost 320,000 nationwide. At the peak, the pharmacies administered more than 40,000 vaccines a week, often to people who had been hesitant to attend mass vaccine centres.

Speaking about the importance of the role of pharmacists, Darragh O'Loughlin, Secretary General of the IPU said, "The activation of the pharmacy vaccination service last June was an important step in the national COVID 19 vaccination campaign. Now, as we plan for the next phase of our fight against COVID-19, we must remember that success and utilise the sector from

day one.

“There are currently over 1,000 pharmacies providing COVID-19 vaccination in towns and villages across the length and breadth of the country. We have seen how providing easy and convenient access to COVID-19 vaccines in pharmacies increases vaccine uptake. Now as cases rise once again, we must do everything we can to deliver this booster campaign as quickly and effectively as possible.”

“Involving pharmacies is particularly important given the concerns being expressed by GPs about their capacity. GPs are, by their own admission, heavily overstretched. The HSE has a simple choice in relation to COVID-19 booster shots: They can compound this GP capacity problem by only involving GPs, or they can alleviate the pressure by enlisting pharmacists who have proven their ability to deliver vaccinations on a significant scale in communities across the country.

Concluding, O’Loughlin also called for greater clarity on the use of antigen testing in Ireland. “With COVID-19 cases rising rapidly, antigen tests can provide an added layer of safety and peace of mind for people. In workplaces and education for example they can be used to supplement existing public health advice. The current NPHET position on the use of antigen tests appears of out step with much of Europe. The appropriate use of these tests should be progressed by NPHET, with clear policies and advice provided.”

ENDS

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