

Pharmacists key role in Vaccine Plan welcomed by IPU

- - Pharmacists caution need for exceptional planning to ensure success
 - **Access to adequate vaccines essential to success of campaign**

15 December 2020: The Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) has welcomed the central role that will be played by pharmacists in Ireland's COVID-19 vaccination campaign. However, following the publication of the *National COVID-19 Vaccination Strategy*, the IPU has cautioned that the success of the campaign requires exceptional logistical and communications planning, and insisted that pharmacists must be included in planning the rollout. Speaking following the publication, IPU Secretary General Darragh O'Loughlin said, "We are pleased that Ireland's 1,800 community pharmacies have been included in this vital public health effort, as the contribution of Irish community pharmacies will be essential to ensure success. Pharmacists have been administering flu and other vaccines in Ireland for over a decade and have all the training and experience required; our involvement will significantly boost the country's overall vaccination capacity. "Getting every detail correct is essential to avoiding delays," cautioned Mr O' Loughlin. "What is absolutely essential is that we don't get a repeat of what happened with the flu vaccine where hundreds of thousands of people were denied the option of getting the vaccine in their local pharmacy when there was none available because the delivery system had let them down or vaccines had been directed to GPs instead of pharmacies. With the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines, it is imperative that pharmacists have access to enough vaccines to meet people's needs. "The HSE must streamline the bureaucracy and red tape to the absolute minimum both for patients and those administering the vaccine. People won't tolerate delays or complications caused by unnecessary bureaucracy, and we need to make the booking process straightforward for everyone. There must also be a flawless logistical system to ensure deliveries of the vaccine happen on time to the locations that people can access most easily and are booked into. We must avoid any error that causes delays or vaccine wastage." Clear information, not just on the vaccine itself but also on the entire campaign, is essential, advised Mr O'Loughlin; "With 78 million visits to Irish pharmacies each year and pharmacists among the most trusted professionals, we are at the frontline of community healthcare. Pharmacists need to have all relevant information as soon as it is available, so we can promote and encourage uptake of the vaccine among the public." Mr O'Loughlin concluded by encouraging anyone who is cautious about the COVID-19 vaccine to rely on trusted sources of information; "It is entirely reasonable and natural to ask questions, however, it is important to take information from reliable and

trusted sources and to avoid unfounded rumours. Regulators such as the European Medicines Agency are conducting the same stringent checks on these vaccines that apply to any other. If they, as we all hope, ultimately approve COVID-19 vaccines, we can be confident of their safety and efficacy and that will be a very good day for Ireland.”