

Pharmacy AGM To Hear Government Inaction ‘Stifling’ Community Pharmacy



- **No fee increase, pharmacist shortages and rising bureaucracy key pharmacy concerns.**
- **Years of underinvestment compounding pharmacist shortage.**
- **Demands for Minister for Health to stop ‘procrastinating’ and start engaging with pharmacies.**

13 May 2023: Consistent inaction from government and a failure to support community healthcare through Irish pharmacies is ‘stifling’ community pharmacy, is likely to lead to serious consequences and exacerbated the growing shortage of pharmacists. This warning will be

issued by Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) President Dermot Twomey when he addresses the organisation's AGM later today.

Speaking to pharmacists from across the country Mr Twomey said, "Irish people view their pharmacist as their first port of call for their healthcare needs. While the profession continues to expand the vital role it plays for patients, it is continuously taken for granted by the health authorities and the Minister."

Mr Twomey outlined how pharmacies, who perform a range of services on behalf of the state, are close to breaking point due to years of underfunding and significant increasing levels of administration under the community drugs schemes. "We have not had an increase in our dispensing fees in nearly 15 years. Since 2009, the amount paid to pharmacies for each medication we dispense has reduced by 19%, while the costs incurred for the provision of this service have increased by 23%."

"Something has to give as we no longer have a functioning, viable business model and our hands are tied, as we have no ability to pass on these rising costs to patients as reimbursement prices are set by the state with the manufacturers of medicines."

Under the terms of the Public Service Pay and Pensions Act 2017, Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly must review the rates payable to community pharmacy contractors before the end of June this year. Despite this crucial deadline Mr Twomey said that the Minister and the Department of Health are maintaining complete 'radio silence.'

"We are now less than two months away from the statutory review process being completed. It is disappointing and distressing that we continue to be completely ignored by the Minister and his officials. Every pharmacy in the sector, which supports the employment of 31,000, has no indication of what their largest customer will be paying in just a few weeks' time. We are calling for him to immediately engage with us in a meaningful way."

A shortage of qualified pharmacists in Ireland is also remains a major concern Mr Twomey revealed. "With the increase in administrative demands placed on community pharmacists by the HSE and the continual lack of investment by the state it is becoming harder and harder to attract and retain qualified pharmacists in our practices. We welcome that the number of pharmacy student places available in Ireland is under review. However, improvements to the process for recognition of qualifications and registering of pharmacists from outside the EU with the pharmacy regulator the PSI has not progressed at anything close to an acceptable pace."

"There is also a need to address the rapidly increasing bureaucracy, red-tape and the increased administrative load imposed on the sector. Pharmacists are healthcare professionals not administrators and every minute spent on form filling is one less minute spent with our

patients. It is a huge frustration that is leading to pharmacists leaving the profession and further exacerbating pharmacist shortages.”

Concluding IPU President Dermot Twomey said, “The health authorities in this country are expecting pharmacists to do more work for the state, for less money, while continuing to bare higher costs. This will not be allowed to continue. We are asking for a viable fee and to be treated with the respect other healthcare professionals enjoy.”

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