

Pharmacy Opportunities Including Funding Must be Prioritised by the Next Government



Irish Pharmacy Union Releases Election Manifesto

31 October 2024: The Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) is urging the next government to prioritise significant opportunities to enhance community-based healthcare. The IPU has outlined five key areas where progress should be made to improve patient care in its election manifesto issued today ahead of the upcoming general election.

The top priority, according to the IPU, is addressing the underfunding of pharmacies. IPU President Tom Murray stated, “In Ireland, significant political attention is paid to healthcare, yet community pharmacies, which are the most accessed healthcare providers, are often overlooked.”

“Pharmacies deliver essential state funded healthcare services through community drug schemes, but fees for these services have been frozen since 2009, while operating costs have soared. Currently, one in ten pharmacies is loss-making, and without swift government action, pharmacy closures could become a reality. To prevent this, the IPU is calling for an increase in the dispensing fee to €6.50 per item of medicine dispensed, a modest adjustment seeing reinstatement to the 2009 rate.”

In the past year, progress has been made in governmental policies to provide for expanding healthcare services in pharmacies. Mr Murray highlighted, “The foundations for more efficient care have been laid through the work of the Expert Taskforce and new legislation. Opportunities for independent autonomous pharmacist prescribing are now within reach but require continued support from the Minister for Health after the election.”

The IPU is also advocating for a more proactive approach to managing pharmaceutical care of our citizens. “The state spends nearly €2.5 billion on medicines annually, yet there is no cohesive national strategy to ensure the safe and effective use of these medicines, leading to challenges like medicine shortages and delayed treatments, affecting patient care, Mr Murray said. “A Chief Pharmaceutical Officer, as recommended by the Expert Taskforce, should be appointed promptly within the Department of Health to oversee policy development to ensure high standards of pharmaceutical care for all citizens.”

Key Recommendations in the IPU Election Manifesto:

1. Increase the community drug dispensing fee to €6.50.
2. Streamline HSE reimbursement processes and reduce administrative burdens. Provide for a nationwide programme for safe and appropriate medicine disposal.
3. Adopt a more proactive approach to managing medicine shortages.
4. Fully implement the Expert Taskforce recommendations.
5. Develop a national pharmaceutical care strategy led by a Chief Pharmaceutical Officer within the Department of Health.

Mr. Murray concluded, “The pharmacy sector in Ireland already delivers exceptional service to the public, yet it has tremendous potential to enhance healthcare even further if supported with the right policies and resources. Investing in community pharmacies will offer value for money, improve patient outcomes, and expand access to primary healthcare. We are eager to work with the next government to make these goals a reality. However, those aiming to lead Ireland must acknowledge that pharmacies are at a critical juncture, and urgent funding is essential.”

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