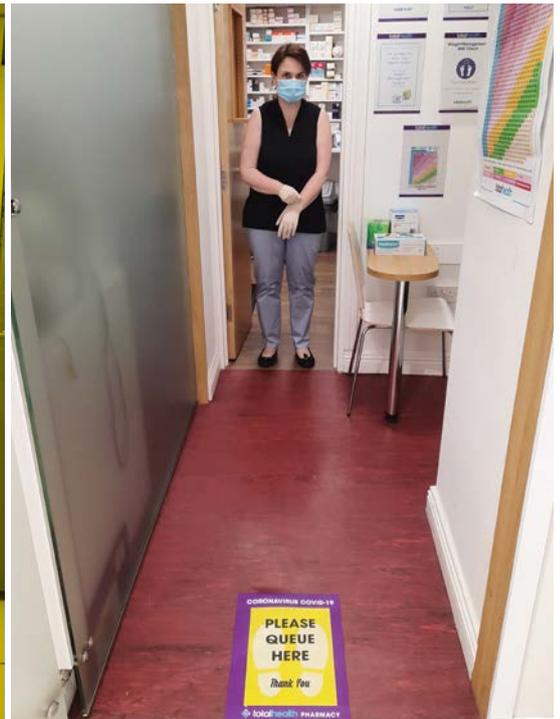


Pharmacy life under COVID-19: Case Studies



As pharmacies continue to alter their premises to comply with social distancing measures as a result of COVID-19, we bring you three case studies of how pharmacists around the country are making alterations to their premises.

Brett's totalhealth Pharmacy



Elizabeth Lang opened Brett's totalhealth Pharmacy in Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo, in late March, as the COVID-19 restrictions gripped the country. She provides an overview of how she has dealt with ensuring her premises comply with all regulations.

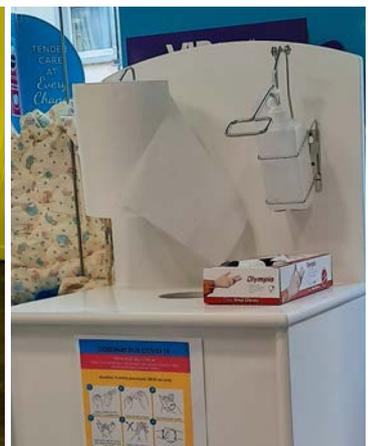
Customers' response

We are lucky in Tubbercurry. We have two supermarkets on the main street who implemented really good handwashing facilities and social distancing measures at the very start and this made it easier to educate our customers on the new practices. I don't have social distancing markings outside the shop as I could only achieve this by spray painting the ground. Customers can park on the street so we ask

them to wait in their car if there is any delay, and we bring their prescription to them. Healthmail has helped with this as we often have the prescription before the patient arrives and we strive to have these ready to eliminate waiting time. I have a sign on the door asking customers to check before entering as I realistically only have room for two or three customers at a time. At busy times, I assign a staff member to assist with this.

Counter barrier

I had a custom-made barrier erected in front of the OTC counter back in March as this meant I was able to keep my front of shop accessible while keeping my staff safe. The barrier is in three sections so I will be able to remove it slowly a panel at a time over a few weeks or months as appropriate. The barrier has been effective, but it can feel quite claustrophobic and does make counselling patients more difficult – even more so



now we are wearing masks full-time while working. Space is also an issue here. Only one staff member can be in that area at one time to adhere to social distancing of staff, to ensure we would be considered casual contacts in the event one of us contracts COVID-19.

Consultation room

I am fortunate that my consultation room is more

than two metres long so I put a floor mark for the customer to stand on and I can distance sufficiently for consultations.

One-way system

Even though I felt the one-way system was kind of obvious, quite a number of patients need to be directed to leave the shop by the arrows.

Hand sanitiser

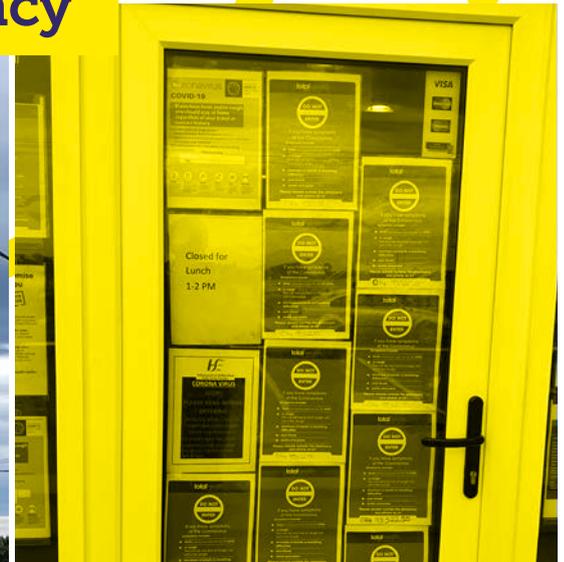
I had a sanitisation unit installed at the door and it is really comforting that almost all of the customers look for it when they enter and when they leave. I also have hand gel at the counter for anyone who missed it when they came in.

All sinks in the dispensary, staff toilets and break area have soap, hand sanitiser,

disposable paper towels and appropriate signage. Disposable surgical masks are worn at all times during work. Hand sanitiser is beside the till for use each time we handle money. We only wear gloves for specific tasks and then remove and dispose of them immediately.

“The barrier has been effective, but it can feel quite claustrophobic and does make counselling patients more difficult – even more so now we are wearing masks full-time while working.”

O'Donnell's totalhealth Pharmacy



Rory O'Donnell of O'Donnell's totalhealth Pharmacy in Gweedore, Co. Donegal, provides some information on how he has adapted his pharmacy to the COVID-19 restrictions.

Customers' response

Customers have become very accustomed to the current measures and are reassured we have taken steps to help reduce any risk of infection. We have been humbled time and again by the gratitude shown by customers for the efforts our team has made.

Difficulties

The most difficult aspect of the changes is the need to keep a two-metre distance from patients, especially those who need to have a private consultation with the pharmacist. We have seen a great deal of innovation such as telemedicine, and of course Healthmail has proved very effective. Nonetheless we very much look forward to being able to deal with our patients in the normal way when this becomes possible again.

Pride in pharmacy

I am very proud of my team, who have worked tirelessly to keep business as normal as possible for our patients and customers. Pharmacy in Ireland has risen to this challenge and it is fantastic to see this being reflected in the levels of trust expressed by the public in a recent IPSOS MRBI poll.



Killians CarePlus Pharmacy



Eoghan Hanly of Killians CarePlus Pharmacy in Loughrea, Co. Galway, reflects on how he has prepared his pharmacy for life under COVID-19.

Customers' response

Early on in the crisis, customers needed a lot of direction and guidance. We provided this through posters and public address announcements as staff were not permitted to emerge from behind the protective screens. Now three months into the pandemic, customers are self-directing and have become familiar with the safety procedures we have had to implement. Staff can now emerge from behind the screens and engage with customers again while observing social distancing and wearing appropriate face masks. Difficulties have arisen on occasion with customers not observing

social distancing while in the shop, but once they are politely asked to comply they are cooperative. Another challenge we continue to face is the maximum limit of three persons at a time in the shop that our floor space allows. We try to overcome this by providing a delivery service, have an online ordering service and by dropping prescriptions and goods to customers while they park up and wait.

Challenges

Social distancing continues to be the biggest challenge for both staff and customers. We had originally split into two teams to make keeping distance between staff

members easier, but with the gradual lifting of restrictions and increasing workload on fewer staff we decided to go back to full staff. While this has helped with the workload it has meant we now have to wear facemasks while still trying to maintain a two-metre gap.

Pride in pharmacy

Pharmacy teams around the country have done an excellent job under extremely difficult circumstances. I am proud of the profession and co-workers who were and continue to be the face of healthcare in their communities during this pandemic.



All pharmacists in this article have contributed videos of the measures they have undertaken, which are available on www.ipu.ie > Professional > Coronavirus Information > Pharmacy Videos.

