



Working in the New Norm

As we move into the next phase of the Government's plan for reopening society and business, more and more retailers are reopening, and we are seeing a variety of different measures to ensure compliance with Government regulations. Smaller retailers are finding their feet after having watched in awe at how larger outlets and pharmacies have succeeded in being ahead of the curve with regards to ensuring compliance with the regulations. In the third of a series of articles, IPU Business Development Manager Darren Kelly examines the different areas you need to look at to maintain compliance with the regulations, and what you can do to move from temporary screening solutions to more secure options to maintain the health and wellbeing of your team.

Ahead of the rest

Talking to other retailers, I have a sense that they feel pharmacy has led the way with regards to efficiently putting measures in place to enable us to continue providing a service to the public. The measures that you have put in place to ensure your staff were safe to continue providing a service to the public has been selfless during this period. This was expressed to me from many retail groups, especially with regards to the *Return to Work Safely Protocol* (see www.ipu.ie > Professional > Coronavirus Information > 4. Employment Supports) who said we are far ahead of the rest. It may have felt strange to complete a return



to work safely checklist even though we never closed, but this checklist will ensure you remain compliant with the most up-to-date health and safety regulations, and should also be used to assist you in identifying the areas that you need to address and what solutions (e.g. screens, signage, PPE) may be required in your pharmacy.

Restart Grant

Pharmacies have implemented health and safety measures throughout the country at a significant cost to both cashflow and retail sales. As we move through the Government's reopening phases and we start to bring customers back into pharmacies, we need to look at what we have in place, what we want to provide, and how we can provide it.

A first step in recouping some cashflow is to apply for the Restart Grant available from your Local Authority. If your retail business (excluding dispensary/medicinal business) has reduced by 25%, log on to your Local Authority website and complete the online application. The process is all completed online and is easy to follow, and we are aware that many members have been successful with their applications.

Sanitising hands

One of the many measures mentioned in the *Return to Work Safely Protocol* was the provision of hand sanitiser at the entrance and exit of the pharmacy. Many of you will have been to the grocery store and seen the units that they are using. Some are good quality, and some are questionable. In my local retail outlet, it is a large unit that you push to get the gel, but it is never full, so they have a bottle of gel and some blue roll. There is no bin available, so people just dump the paper in the baskets. This is not the most professional or health-inspiring image when I enter to do my grocery shopping. If you take a look from your customer's view, do you have



adequate signage highlighting that customers must sanitise hands on entry; do you have a professional looking dispensing unit that is easy to use and identifiable to customers entering your pharmacy; and does it create a cluttered feel to the front of your pharmacy? I have attached some images of what is available to ensure the message is clear, ensuring that your customer knows before they come into the pharmacy that your pharmacy is compliant, and that their health and wellbeing is of primary concern to you and your staff. Also, you will see that some of the units are so slim that there is no cluttered feel to the front of the pharmacy.

These are just a selection of stands available and I would recommend that you assess the space you have, what you feel you need to be compliant

and shop around as they vary in price and size.

Counter screens

Customers have become accustomed to dealing with pharmacy staff through Perspex or glass screens at this point. There are many options offered by numerous shop fitters who have been put to the pin of their collar since the COVID-19 crisis began. In my article in the June issue of the *IPU Review* I talked about one-way systems, sign posting offers so that customers moving through the pharmacy could easily see the highlighted offers, and the different ways to do this. As we allow more customers into the pharmacy, our customer engagement becomes even more important. Vulnerable patients in our pharmacies are greatly assured when they

see the efforts we are making to follow the infection control guidance and indeed they have an expectation that we will as healthcare providers. Rightly or wrongly they expect us to model this and they have a higher level of expectation of us over other retailers.

Going forward, we need to look at whether what we have in place is fit for purpose in the long-term. Below is an illustrative design image with a ceiling to counter screen, but there is still room for staff to come out to the retail floor space to engage with customers. The most efficient way to find the correct solution for your pharmacy is when you complete the *Social Distancing and Infection Control Risk Review Template for Community Pharmacies* (see www.ipu.ie > Professional > Coronavirus Information > 2. Pharmacy Environment) or the

KDL Interiors and Curragh Pharmacy





DDC Shopfit

Return to Work Safely Protocol. Communicate with your team and decide what is going to work best for your team.

As you will see from the examples, there are many options available. Complete your *Social Distancing and Infection Control Risk Review Template for Community Pharmacies*, analyse the possible risk, communicate with your team, and implement what works for your pharmacy.

Additional professional services

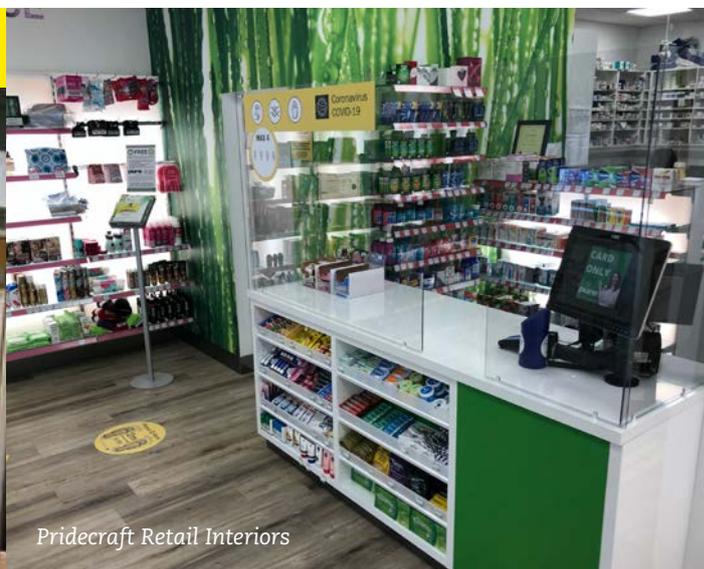
Do you provide additional services in your pharmacy? If so, are you looking to restart these, and have you looked at how this can be done in your consultation room? Most pharmacies have closed off the consultation room or have offered a reduced number of services over the past 14 weeks. As we move forward, the time may be right to re-establish these services with the correct infection and control procedures in place.

How can you do it? Firstly, you need to carry out a risk assessment. Once you have identified the risks, establish how you can mitigate against them. In the illustrative drawing on previous page from KDL Interiors for a new pharmacy opening, you will see the proposal is for a screen on the desk to provide safety for both the pharmacist and the patient. Correct PPE would be in use by both the pharmacist and the patient. This option works well as it is a new fitout, but you will need to look at your own consultation room and see what works for you.

Floor markings or a floor mat (available from several suppliers) will assist in ensuring the patient and the pharmacist maintain the correct social distance whilst in the consultation room.

No matter what option you decide to implement, some basic housekeeping of the counter and your consultation areas should be completed:

- Remove unnecessary objects;



Pridecraft Retail Interiors

Use of Consultation Area during COVID-19

Infection, prevention, and control precautions for COVID-19 require that:

- If this is not possible, the pharmacist must wear a surgical mask and the patient must wear a face covering;
- Hand sanitiser should be made available in the consultation area for both the pharmacist and the patient to use; and
- Tissues and a bin should also be available.

Other considerations for the pharmacy include:

- Aim to keep contact time between the pharmacist and the patient in the consultation area to a minimum (without interfering with patient care);
- Consider providing an alternative for counselling patients, e.g. use of phone, video consultation;
- Utilise online consultation forms or apps for consultation and 'click and collect' for EHC;
- Have an online booking portal for vaccination or health screening which facilitates provision of information to patients and confirms consent in advance of the patient arriving in the pharmacy (see article on p. 63);
- With reduced numbers of people in the pharmacy, there may be another area of the pharmacy that is less closed-in and still provides sufficient privacy for counselling; and
- You may wish to erect a Perspex screen in the consultation area to provide a physical barrier between the pharmacist and patient.

- Fixtures such as leaflet stands for walls could be useful so as the pharmacist could hand them to the patient

rather than leaving them on the counter;

- Infection control measures will need to be



Howards Pharmacy Moycullen

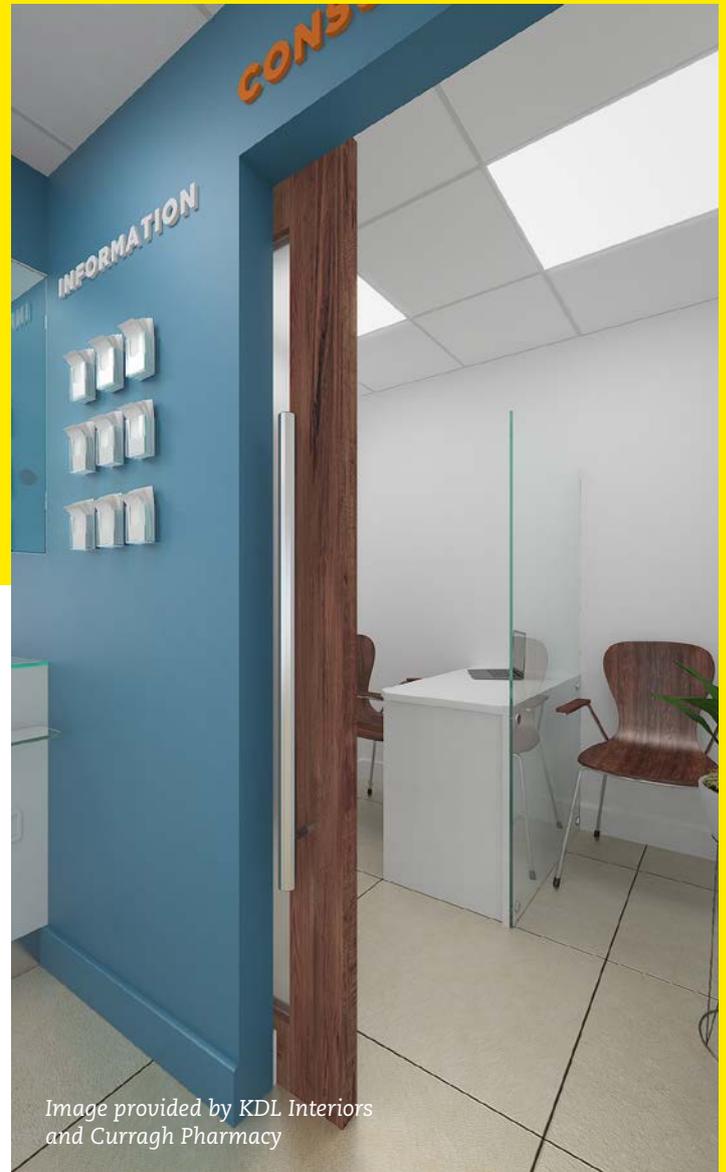


Image provided by KDL Interiors and Curragh Pharmacy

applied, so clear surfaces that are easy to clean are a must;

- A4 plastic document holders attached to walls for the flu vaccine excipients list;
- Getting seats that are wipeable rather than cloth fabric;
- Sufficient bins with lids; and
- Tissues, wipes and correct PPE in place.

See the information box on the previous page, 'Use of Consultation Area during COVID-19', for more information.

The correct type and use of PPE is very important and it is imperative that you and your team are fully informed on the most up-to-date information. There are guides to assist

you and your team available on the IPU Website under Coronavirus Information. I suggest that if you have not already done so, that you take some time to read this information.

In a recent survey (conducted by Amárach Research for the Department of Health), 61% of people said they expect a second wave of COVID-19 to happen and having these measures in place will reassure the public, especially those who are medically vulnerable who attend pharmacy for medicines, that you are reducing their exposure.

The IPU maintains a list of suppliers who have been recommended to us by members who can assist you in ensuring you implement the correct solution and the compliant types of PPE for your pharmacy.

The images in this article have all been provided by suppliers who are on this list, which is available on the IPU website. I would also like to thank Shane Howard of Howards Pharmacy in Moycullen for sending through some images of what he has implemented in his pharmacy.

If you would like any additional information or advice in relation to this series of articles, please do not hesitate to contact me or my colleague Clare Fitzell (via darren.kelly@ipu.ie and clare.fitzell@ipu.ie).

If you have any images of measures that you have implemented in your pharmacy that you think would be of assistance to other members, please send them to me at darren.kelly@ipu.ie.