

Global Pandemic Preparedness and Response report identifies critical need to expand pharmacy's role in health emergency response

Saturday 27 December, 2025

On the United Nations' **International Day of Epidemic Preparedness (27th December)**, an international body representing over 1 million pharmacists across the globe has published a report on Pandemic Preparedness and Response, calling on healthcare leaders and policymakers to urgently expand pharmacists' roles in emergency preparedness and response strategies.

The report has been developed by the **Commonwealth Pharmacists Association** - the international body of the national pharmacy associations of Commonwealth of Nations member states - and utilises case studies from the COVID-19 pandemic to call upon governments to recognise pharmacy's importance in safeguarding national and international health security as they seek to minimise the risk of future pandemics and tackle them as they arise.

Examining pharmacists' role in tackling COVID-19 in countries in seven countries in North America, the Caribbean, Europe, Africa, and Southeast Asia*, the report concludes that, although pharmacists in each of these countries contributed significantly to pandemic response, they are also a largely untapped resource capable of strengthening health systems and preventing pandemic-related deaths with better representation in national emergency frameworks and decision-making processes.

The Report identifies four key systemic barriers preventing the potential of the pharmacy workforce in pandemic preparedness from being realised:

- the exclusion of pharmacists from the policymaking level of emergency preparedness and response;
- a lack of formal recognition of the roles they play in this field;
- insufficient training and professional development opportunities for pharmacists in areas such as vaccine delivery, infection prevention and control, and disaster management;
- structural deficiencies that prevent pharmacists from maintaining continuity of care during crises.

The report emphasises a need to advocate for stronger integration of pharmacists at all levels of pandemic preparedness and response alongside policy reform to consolidate this, as well as financial investment in pharmacy-specific training programmes and advanced digital health infrastructure.

Grace Grange, Research Officer at the Commonwealth Pharmacists Association and principal author of the Pandemic Preparedness and Response report, said:

"Pharmacists were essential to the COVID-19 response, yet they are too often excluded from emergency planning. If we are serious about strengthening pandemic preparedness, pharmacists must be embedded in health emergency frameworks. This report presents clear evidence of their vital contributions from the COVID-19 pandemic and sets out practical recommendations that recognise integrating pharmacists as essential to future health emergencies."

Dr Amy Chan, Senior Research Advisor at the Commonwealth Pharmacists Association and co-author of the Pandemic Preparedness and Response report, said:

"Pharmacists are the first line of defence in pandemic preparedness. As the health professional who is most accessible to our communities, they bring trusted health and medicines expertise in times of crisis to foster real-world resilience. This report highlights the important roles that pharmacists can play, and includes learnings from the pandemic to shape further growth of this role to improve the health of our nations."

Kwabena Asante Offei, Vice-President of the Commonwealth Pharmacists Association and contributor to the Pandemic Preparedness and Response report, said:

"Pharmacists are highly trained health professionals who are within reach of community members and work within systems with the agility needed to mobilise and respond to emergencies. Their integration into preparedness and response planning is essential if we are to reach more people, in more places,

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when emergencies occur. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated clearly that pharmacists are not peripheral to emergency response — they are essential. This report captures those lived experiences and underscores why strengthening the role of pharmacists protects communities and builds resilient health systems that can respond effectively to future crises."

Notes to Editors

* The participating countries are: Canada, Ghana, Malaysia, Malta, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Zimbabwe.

Grace Grange, Dr Amy Chan, Kwabena Asante Offei and other CPA representatives are available for interview or further comment on request.

The **Commonwealth Pharmacists Association (CPA)** is an Accredited Organisation of the Commonwealth, in official relations with the World Health Organisation, and a leading member of the Commonwealth Health Professions and Partners Alliance. Established in 1969, CPA serves as the international body of the National Pharmacy Associations of the Commonwealth, representing over one million pharmacists on the global stage, and since 2015, has operated as a UK-registered charity (1176132).

CPA's vision is to advance equitable access to safe and effective medicines and pharmacy services for a healthier world, and pursues this by spearheading projects that build capability in the health workforce, strengthen health systems, and advocate for patients and the pharmacy profession.

Having started her career as a community pharmacist for three years, **Grace Grange** then transitioned into public health, managing the Health Protection Programme for a Local Authority in the United Kingdom. In this role, she led on outbreak response (including COVID-19), improving immunisation uptake and sexual health, and addressing inequalities. Grace works part-time for the Commonwealth Pharmacists Association in the Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning team, where she has worked on reports for 'Actionable Solutions to Tackle Workforce Challenges and the Climate Crisis' and 'Pandemic Preparedness and Response'.

Dr Amy Chan is a clinical academic pharmacist with over 10 years of experience in the public health service, ranging from patient-facing clinical roles to project and team management roles. She has specific research interests and expertise in behavioural science and exploring medicines use and outcomes. Dr Chan applies her technical expertise in these areas to inform Commonwealth Pharmacists Association projects, strategy and policy, and provides advice on how health data can be used to improve health outcomes across the Commonwealth.

Kwabena Asante Offei is the Vice-President of the Commonwealth Pharmacists Association and is the chairman of the Ethics and Disciplinary Committee of the Pharmaceutical Society of Ghana. In 2022, he chaired the national committee that developed and implemented Ghana's electronic pharmacy policy and is currently a member of a three-member committee reviewing Ghana's pharmacy education policy. In addition to being a pharmacist, Kwabena is also a lawyer and has a master's degree in Economic Policy Management.

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