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**Standard Operation Procedure: Supporting Community Pharmacy Queue Management during COVID 19**

**Name of Pharmacy:**

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| Prepared by:  HSCB for use in community pharmacy during the COVID 19 pandemic period | Date of preparation:  30 Mar 2020 |
| Version 1.0 |
| Signature of behalf of Pharmacy: | Information is correct on date of issue; the SOP will be updated if there are major changes during the COVID 19 period |

**BACKGROUND**

It is recognised that during COVID 19 extra demand for prescription services is putting further strain on pharmacies to support their patients.

Pharmacies have been given authorisation by HSCB to reduce opening hours to the general public if required; opening 10am to 1pm, closed for lunch from 1pm to 2pm to facilitate cleaning and restock, and thereafter open in the afternoon as normal. The opening hours may reduce further due to staff absence for self-isolation, so local flexibility will be required.

The increased demand and the need to adopt social distancing measures in order to reduce the transmission of Coronavirus (COVID-19) mean significant queuing times are inevitable at pharmacies.

**SCOPE**

This SOP outlines the arrangements for community pharmacy, and Community or Voluntary Organisations coordinating volunteers to manage queues on behalf of a community pharmacy, to ensure appropriate governance measures are in place for the protection and support of patients, pharmacy staff and volunteers.

Volunteers must be registered with a local community or voluntary organisation who will work with the Community Development Health Network (CDHN).

The community or voluntary organisation must commit to ensuring volunteers are Access NI vetted, insured and supported to complete deliveries.

CDHN will ascertain and monitor demand from pharmacy, recruit community or voluntary groups to coordinate volunteers, link community or voluntary groups with a pharmacy/pharmacies, ensure community or voluntary groups adhere to the SOP and are supported to undertake this role.

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| **Name of Organisation** | **Contact details** |
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**COMMUNITY PHARMACY RESPONSIBILITIES**

* Discuss queue manager responsibilities outlined below with the volunteer
* Provide pharmacy specific guidance or advice if different to that outlined below e.g.
  + Entrance/exit protocol
  + Prescription ordering and collection from local GP practices
  + Timelines for collection
  + Delivery arrangements
  + What to do if there are problems with difficult patients
* Provide a face mask, gloves, access to hand-washing facilities and hand sanitiser (if available)
* Provide a clip board and pen
  + Ensure these are cleaned after each session
* Provide patient record sheets
  + If you are using an App for queue management, it is your responsibility to explain its use to the volunteer and ensure appropriate information governance arrangements are in place to protect patient confidentiality
* Answer queue manager queries promptly while they are managing the queue
* Sign volunteer expense form

**VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Role of Queue Manager**

1. **GENERAL**

* Maintain patient confidentiality during all aspects of queue management.
* **If you are in any doubt about ANYTHING during the process please contact the Responsible Pharmacist.**
* This is generally an outdoor role and appropriate clothing should be worn to protect against the weather.
  + In some cases the pharmacy may be located inside a shopping centre

1. **INFECTION CONTROL**

* The pharmacist will give you a mask and gloves (and hand sanitiser if available)
* Wash your hands or use sanitiser regularly e.g. before/after eating, before/after breaks, starting and finishing queue management sessions.
* Avoid touching your mouth, nose, or eye.
* Keep a safe distance of at least 2 metres (approximately 3 steps) away from people.
* If you develop symptoms at any point during the session, alert the pharmacist so alternative arrangements can be made.

1. **INFORMING PATIENTS OF ARRANGEMENTS AT ALL TIMES**

* Introduce yourself, “My name is <first name> and I am working with the <name of> pharmacy team today.”
* Inform patients/representatives in a general announcement that the pharmacy is extremely busy and all the pharmacy team are doing their best to ensure prescriptions are dispensed safely and in as timely a manner as possible.
* Thank patients for their patience and cooperation at this challenging time.
* Advise them that you will need to ask for their name and address to enable the pharmacy team to identify and prioritise their prescriptions
* Advise on the pharmacy’s entrance protocol e.g. number of patients who will be allowed entrance at one time and where to go on entering
  + Pharmacy layout may have changed from what the patient is used to as barriers have been erected to protect pharmacy staff and patients
  + There may be separate queues for entrance and exit
* Repeat these message regularly depending on the length of queue

1. **ENSURING ADHERENCE TO SOCIAL DISTANCING REQUIREMENTS TO SUPPORT INFECTION CONTROL**

* Remind patients to maintain a 2m distance (approximately 3 steps) between themselves and others in the queue
  + The pharmacy may have used physical measures to define 2m e.g. tape on the ground.
* Adhere to the 2m rule for your own protection

1. **MANAGING THE QUEUE**

* Ask for patient name and address and record on the sheet
  + NB it is acknowledged that it will be difficult to maintain confidentiality in the circumstances; Patient can be asked to step away from the queue but it can be difficult to hear at 2m distance
* Pass names and addresses to the dispensary as agreed with the pharmacist e.g. after every 10 names
  + One person may be collecting for more than one patient
* Collect prescriptions and owing slips from those in the queue and pass to dispensary team to ensure they ready for collection when patient reaches top of queue
* Identify patients who need to order prescriptions via the pharmacy; record name, address and items required, pass to dispensary team and advise patient when to return for collection
  + <INSERT local arrangements for timescales>
  + If the volunteer has difficulty with drug names or there is a language barrier they should consult with a member of the pharmacy team
* Pass messages back to patients from the pharmacy team e.g. prescription not in pharmacy, patient needs to call their GP practice, call back at a later date
  + <INSERT local arrangements>
* Use discretion to identify patients who need to jump the queue e.g. difficulty standing, HSC staff such as district nurses picking up items for patients; ensure others ahead in queue are advised of the need to jump queue
  + Ask the pharmacist if you are unsure
* Identify patients more suitable for delivery e.g. older people/ those unable to stand for long periods; discuss with the pharmacist, explain delivery service and send home when appropriate

1. **HANDLING DIFFICULT SITUATIONS**

You may find yourself in a situation that involves an individual becoming angry, upset, impatient, intimidating or demanding. The following points provide some guidance on how to handle these situations.

* Listen
  + Think about how you feel and manage your emotions, remain calm and concentrate on actively listening to the individual’s concerns
  + Ignore sarcasm and exaggeration and don’t take it personally
  + Ask questions about the facts and identify the problem
* Empathise
  + Empathy is not necessarily about agreeing with the individual but indicating that you understand how they feel
  + Be courteous and considerate of the individual’s feelings
  + Make sure that your tone of voice and body language convey a genuine understanding of how they feel
* Resolve
  + Once you have identified the problem, discuss with pharmacy team or propose a solution e.g. prescription delivery service
* Request assistance if required
  + If you are unable to resolve the situation within a reasonable amount of time and/or the individual is displaying increasingly aggressive behaviour, request assistance from pharmacy colleagues
* **If there is a risk of violent behaviour, do not put your personal safety at risk.**
  + A description of appearance and any other known information should then be given to the pharmacist who will in turn liaise with the police.

1. **AT END OF SESSION**

* Pharmacist will sign the Volunteer Expense Form
* Maintain social distancing during this process
* Remember to complete infection control measures e.g. washing your hands and disposing of mask and gloves. . (See section 2 above for further detail)

**VOLUNTEER ORGANISATION RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. **GENERAL**

* Recruit and coordinate vetted volunteers
* Ensure volunteers are not from, or living with, any of the identified at risk groups
* Engage with pharmacy to confirm requirements and assign volunteer
* Ensure volunteers have a fully charged and working mobile available for any emergencies
* Ensure volunteers maintain patient confidentiality during all sessions.
* Follow up with volunteers organisation regarding expenses sheet and feedback

**REFERENCES**

Prescription ordering and management – COVID 19. 25 March 2020. HSCB, Available at: <http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/pdf/Prescription-ordering-and-management-COVID-19.pdf> [accessed 30 March 2020]

Antiviral Collection Points: Queue manager role description. Action Sheet. NHS 2009

Antiviral Collection Points: handling difficult flu friends. Action Sheet. NHS 2009