

29 January 2024

PHARMAC
PO Box 10254
The Terrace
Wellington 6143

Sent via email to: vaccines@pharmac.govt.nz

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Joint proposal from Pharmac and Te Whatu Ora to enable many childhood vaccinations to be given in pharmacies

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the above consultation.

The Pharmacy Guild of New Zealand (Inc.) (the Guild) is a national membership organisation representing the majority of community pharmacy owners. We provide leadership on all issues affecting the sector and advocate for the business and professional interests of community pharmacy.

We strongly support the proposal by Te Whatu Ora and Pharmac to upskill pharmacist vaccinators to become authorised vaccinators and administer certain childhood vaccines and removing the Xpharm restriction from these specified vaccines in the Pharmaceutical Schedule to allow community pharmacies to order these vaccines at no cost and claim reimbursement for the administration.

This initiative will not only eliminate financial barriers to the provision of these vaccines recommended on the National Immunisation Schedule, but also enhance patient access and increase opportunities available for whanau, allowing them to choose where and when they feel comfortable and is convenient to receive their vaccinations. Enabling a wider number of vaccinators trained to administer these vaccines through the large geographical footprint of community pharmacies will positively impact vaccination site accessibility and vaccination rates and outcomes throughout the motu for all tamariki equally, independent of ethnicity or disability.

Our support is based on key findings from the Immunisation Taskforce report released in April 2023, recognising the vital role community pharmacists play in engaging with parents and families during the vaccination process on various health topics and as the preferred health professional to visit for some populations.

Pharmacist vaccinators are well-trained to conduct comprehensive assessments and consultations before and after vaccination events and refer if necessary, ensuring a holistic approach to healthcare. Currently pharmacists undergo the same training as other healthcare workers that are already vaccinating in this space. With well-equipped information technology systems and access to the Aotearoa Immunisation Register (AIR), community pharmacies have the ability to track and support individuals in adhering to vaccination timelines, including pre-calling, recalling, and referring hard-to-reach families to outreach services, contributing to overall public health.

The Immunisation Taskforce report findings emphasise the critical importance of childhood immunisations as effective interventions against preventable diseases and successful completion of the immunisation schedule at six months of age is pivotal for a child's ongoing vaccination likelihood. We believe that, after the successes of the Covid-19 vaccination campaign, community pharmacies are the logical choice to deliver immunisation services in more widespread locations to populations that they know well, including within a pharmacy premises and in outreach settings, aligning with the Taskforce's recommendation to diversify and expand the vaccinator workforce.

We also believe that the patient enrolment system in general practice has excluded a small, but important group of patients, that can be effectively addressed by offering vaccination (and other) services via community pharmacies, which has proven to be an effective and convenient pathway to access in the past for various other minority population groups, e.g., the Minor Ailments Service and the provision of Covid-19 oral antiviral medicines directly from a pharmacist. In both cases the patient's general practitioner is notified of the provision of the service, and with the use of the AIR, this will also be met for childhood vaccinations, ensuring continuity of care of the patient and a collaborative approach.

While we strongly support this proposal, we would like to see the following points be discussed with sector representatives and addressed before rolling out the service in community pharmacies:

- Prioritise quality control standardisation and ensuring sustainability of quality levels as vaccination services expand.
- Ensure long-term and sustainable, equitable funding and financial incentives for providers, including community pharmacies, to ensure the success and longevity of all immunisation programmes.

As witnessed in the success of the Covid-19 immunisation programme, expanded services and locations require effective coordination, planning, marketing and national monitoring. Effective clinical and financial governance at all levels is essential and community pharmacy involvement, funding streams and service delivery should integrate seamlessly.

We would be interested to discuss how these concerns could be addressed without impacting negatively on the administrative burden and strict regulatory and audit requirements of pharmacies.

We are committed to actively participating in the implementation of this initiative and look forward to contributing to the success of expanding access to childhood immunisations.

Thank you for your consideration of our response. If you have any questions about our feedback, please contact our Senior Advisory Pharmacists, Martin Lowis (martin@pgnz.org.nz, 04 802 8218) or Cathy Martin (cathy@pgnz.org.nz, 04 802 8214).

Yours sincerely,



Nicole Rickman

General Manager – Membership and Professional Services