

# The Spanish Pharmacy facing the **COVID-19**

## Actions carried out by the Pharmacy Representative Bodies

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Over the course of this pandemic, we have all suffered, we have all lost friends, family and colleagues; 16 pharmacists and 2 members of our teams have died. Out of the sudden, we were vulnerable to the unknown. However, Spanish pharmacy, instead of shrank back thinking about itself has set an example of dedication and commitment to society.

It has always been an honor for me to represent all Spanish pharmacists, but it has been during these months that I have felt most proud to belong to this profession that has not spared any effort, that has put everything it had at the service of patients.

Being a pharmacist is a special way of being a health professional; it is special because we are in direct contact with our patients, as a part of their neighborhoods, their towns and cities. It has always been like that, but during these months it has also been heroic, because if the cross of pharmacy has never been out, it is because we pharmacists have never given up.

Spaniards have behaved with strength and civility, setting an example to the world. We pharmacists feel proud to be by their side, caring for them, accompanying them. We have cried at their side, but we have also laughed when we saw them back in the pharmacy, having overcome the virus. We have worked side by side with the society. For us pharmacist it has been, and still is, a source of pride working for this society, which is a supportive, tenacious and strong one.

The following pages provide all the actions promoted and sponsored by the General Council. These are pages full of measures, actions but above all, pages full of gratitude to each and every one of the Provincial Pharmacists' Chamber and pharmaceutical professionals in Spain.

There is no greater satisfaction than representing a profession such as pharmacy. To all of them, I would like to express my gratitude and that of the whole General Pharmaceutical Council of Spain.

We are the Pharmacy and we make a better society. We have demonstrated this and we will continue to do so.

Warm regards,

Jesús Aguilar Santamaría

## Executive summary

### **Pharmacy before COVID-19: 10 headlines**

This unprecedented health crisis, both because of the containment measures adopted and because of its status as an essential health facility, put the **network of 22,071 pharmacies on the front line**. From the very first minute, the Pharmacy Representative Bodies were aware that an exceptional situation required exceptional measures.

It has been proved that the **Spanish pharmacy model** has been key in the **health response** to the coronavirus; that the pharmacist is the **most accessible health professional**; and that no citizen has been left **without his or her medicine**. The **30 million Spaniards** who have used pharmacy services during the first month of lockdown are the best guarantee. As can be seen throughout this report, we have made our motto a reality: **We are pharmacists: we provide care, we are social, we are digital**.

#### **1. An essential resource infighting against coronavirus**

On 13<sup>th</sup> March, the General Pharmaceutical Council of Spain, aware of the scope of the crisis and before the State of Alarm was declared, **analyzed the situation and drew up and sent to the health authorities**, in order to promote the prevention of COVID-19, **a series of measures** to promote prevention for citizens and professionals and to ensure access to medicines in a complex scenario. Many of them, as can be seen in this document, have been implemented with remarkable success, thus witnessing the response capacity, agility and efficiency of the Spanish pharmacy in an emergency situation. A value to be taken into account.

#### **2. Fighting tirelessly**

As a first step, the 22,071 pharmacies and the 52,000 pharmacists were provided with a **procedure for action** to strengthen the health system's **detection capacity**, to help preventing the **spread of infection** among citizens, but also among professionals so that the continuity of pharmaceutical provision was not disrupted. Despite the fact that, to date, 19 pharmacy professionals have died, even at the worst moments of the pandemic with 493 affected and 65 pharmacies closed, this network has been functional.

#### **3. A trained and informed profession**

**Training and information** are the grounds of any public health strategy aimed at **promoting prevention**. Along these lines, the Pharmacy Representative Bodies have generated an ambitious and complete documentation for professionals and patients: **4 Technical Reports** with corresponding updates, **7 infographics**, **13 video tips** as well as an extensive training program consisting of a course for professionals with more than **10,000 registered participants** and **different specific webinars**. A repertoire of tools that have undoubtedly contributed to flatten the curve and to the fact that pharmacy has been the first healthcare centre where citizens have come to obtain information ahead of health centres, as surveys have proven.

#### 4. More digital, more efficient

The **digital leadership** of pharmacy has become more evident during the crisis than ever before. We have accelerated the implementation of projects that we have been working on for some time. Thus, on a solid technological basis, **technological solutions** have been developed to **avoid displacements** of patients and reduce **the risk of contagion**.

Specifically, the **public electronic prescription model** has been **modified** to directly renew prescriptions for chronic patients from the pharmacy itself or renewing treatments with visas without having to attend to the health centre. Special attention should also be paid to the technological solutions implemented for the **dispensing of private electronic prescriptions**, which have been made possible thanks to the rapid achievement of agreements with the prescribing professions, mutual societies and private health care.

#### 5. No citizen left behind (without their medicines)

The exceptional situation we are undergoing has left many citizens locked up in their homes, either in quarantine or isolated as they shaped the vulnerable groups. Patients in need of their usual medication so as they would not have to discontinue their medication and suffer possible relapses. The General Council acted quickly by generating an **exceptional protocol of Home Pharmaceutical Care** so that the pharmacist could provide medicines in the households, and in case it could not provide this service, reaching **agreements with the Red Cross and Caritas**. **More than 850,000 patients** have benefited from these services after the very first month of lockdown.

#### 6. First things first: Patients and their safety.

One of the measures provided to the health authorities and implemented in several Autonomous Communities has been the **dispensing of hospital-diagnosed medicines in community pharmacies** to avoid unnecessary risks. Thanks to a protocol with the Hospital Pharmacy Services and in collaboration with the Federation of Pharmaceutical Wholesalers (Fedifar), the **workload of the hospital services has been reduced**, as well as the **risk of COVID-19 contagion** for more than **7,000 patients** from risk groups. These patients were given the possibility to keep up with their treatments by just going to their nearest pharmacy. In addition, we have met with the main patients' associations to find out their needs first hand and to be able to offer solutions; **because we are a supportive and concerned pharmacy**.

#### 7. Pharmacy is concerned with the most vulnerable population groups

In addition to the health effects of this crisis, there are the social effects. From the Pharmacy Representative Bodies we have also worked to tackle them through initiatives such as **Mask-19**, implemented in more than **16,000 pharmacies** and designed to help **victims of gender-based violence** and which has been exported to countries such as **France, Argentina or Chile**. We have also worked in collaboration with **Law enforcement bodies** in the detection of people belonging to **vulnerable groups** who have stopped taking their usual medication, a sign that they **may need help, making the community pharmacy a valuable "social sensor"**

## 8. Sincere vocation and spirit of public service.

Consistent information in fighting against **hoaxes and fake news** has been one of the essential aspects for citizens to be able to effectively protect themselves against COVID-19. From the Pharmacy Representative Bodies we have worked tirelessly to provide, at all times, clear messages to the entire population and through numerous channels, from our Internet website, media and social networks. Among this informative material there are more than 7 infographics and 13 video tips.

## 9. The cross of the pharmacy does never go out

**The Pharmacy gets where no one else does and is the healthcare infrastructure and the most extensive health and social intelligence network in the country.** Aware of this unique feature of the Spanish Pharmacy Network, the Pharmacy Representative Bodies also wanted to send a **message of peace** to all Spaniards. In all towns, streets, neighborhoods and cities, regardless of their postal code, they have a health professional and a health resource at their service without a previous **appointment or a waiting list**.

But we are also motivated by a desire to improve. For this reason, the Pharmacy Representative Bodies wanted to know the evaluation of the **role of the pharmacy in the COVID-19** crisis through a study carried out by GAD-3. These are the highlighting facts: **more than 30 million Spaniards** went to a pharmacy during the first month of lockdown; of which more than **5.5 million** people did so for reasons related to the coronavirus; and **91.3%** of the citizens valued **positively** the performance of the pharmacy in this crisis.

## 10. International Cooperation

In addition to working at an **international level** on the detection and monitoring of measures adopted by the authorities and pharmacy organizations both in Europe and internationally, we've worked to **exchange our knowledge and experience with Europe and Latin America**, by means of protocols and action plans, as well as participating in several international virtual meetings.

## 1. Introduction

The community pharmacy as the **most accessible healthcare facility** to the patient has been tested, as well as the entire health care system, by COVID-19. Since the beginning of the health crisis, pharmacies have been one of the health centres that have provided quality health care to the population. The **health and care work** of the **74,000 pharmacists** in the front line has been key, working in each of their **modalities of exercise**: hospital, clinical analysis, primary care, military pharmacy.

Since the first cases were detected in Spain, the `Pharmacy Representative Bodies placed the network of pharmacies **at the service of the Government** to strengthen health care for the population, making proposals in defense of patients' interests and to **facilitate access**, especially for the most vulnerable, to medicines. More than **54,000 pharmacists** have been in charge of the **22,000 pharmacies** in this country, ensuring the access to treatment for the population. In the first month of lockdown, **more than 30 million people have visited a community pharmacy**, almost two thirds of the population. In addition, **2.2 million citizens have received telephone care** from their pharmacist, and another **850,000 have received pharmaceutical care at home**, especially those over 65.

Therefore, throughout these months, the Pharmacy Representative Bodies have carried out different actions, both at a **political** and **technical level**, aimed at professionals and citizens, in compliance with its social nature. Several **protocols have been agreed upon** and implemented during the lockdown phase in order to bring **treatments** closer to the homes of vulnerable patients, facilitate the availability of hospital medicines to outpatients through the community pharmacy or make **access to treatments more flexible** through electronic prescriptions. All these actions have been developed to reduce risks by maintaining special coordination with other groups at different levels of care.

In addition to these actions carried out with patients' groups and social initiatives, on this occasion, the Pharmacy Representative Bodies have promoted, from the outset, providing **accurate information** to patients in order to avoid a sterile alarm and to raise awareness of the importance of preventive measures to combat the lack of protective materials and to **avoid the shortage** of those who need them most. With regard to de-escalation, the population is being informed of the **correct use of masks**, also supporting the dissemination of measures promoted by the health authorities. **Supporting vulnerable groups** such as abused women has been reinforced, with initiatives such as **"Mask 19"**, to make it easier for these women to ask for help, or through the agreement with the Red Cross and Caritas to make their medication available to the elderly and dependents.

At international level, contact and joint work has been maintained with professional organizations such as the FIP, European Pharmaceutical Group (PGEU), sharing initiatives with national organizations in different countries.

All this would not have been possible without the **unanimous response** of the entire pharmaceutical community. The General Pharmaceutical Council has worked tirelessly to support its Associations and members, providing them with **training and updated information**, and developing working procedures that facilitate the implementation of security measures for Community Pharmacy staff, as a particularly exposed population.

This document details **all the actions** carried out by the Pharmacy Representative Bodies within the framework of the emergency plan for COVID-19

In this situation of uncertainty the pharmacy has brought a bit of a certainty and a confidence for our citizens

In these dark times... **The pharmacy cross does never go out.**

## 2. Actions aimed at pharmaceutical professionals on COVID-19 infection.

Community pharmacists are often the **first point of contact** for patients at the first sign of a health problem and the network of over **22,000 pharmacies** is a key point of contact for initial care within the health system. For this reason, many measures have been promoted by the Pharmacy Representative Bodies both to reinforce the safety of all pharmaceutical professionals, thus ensuring **continuity of care**, and to guarantee the **safety** of the population. These measures have been worked on from both a health policy and technical perspective. Likewise, it has been essential that our professionals have **had reliable and updated information** at all times in order to provide an adequate service to the patients.

### 2.1 Health policy initiatives relating to the needs of all pharmacy professionals

**Communication and coordination** with the different departments of both state and autonomous community governments has been one of the focuses of work during the pandemic. In this sense, the Pharmacy Representative Bodies has been in **steady contact** with the Health Authorities transmitting the needs of our group and providing solutions to the problems that have arisen throughout this health crisis. Among the 40+ measures proposed, we will highlight:

- Request to the Ministry of Health and to all the Health Ministers of the Autonomous Regions on March 13 a set of exceptional measures to address the COVID crisis <https://www.portalfarma.com/Profesionales/consejoinforma/Paginas/2020-comunicado-emergencia-sanitaira-covid-19.aspx>
- Request to the Ministry of Health to include the General Council in its Crisis Committee for COVID-19.
- Petition to the Ministry of Health and the AEMPS to exceptionally dispense Hydroalcoholic Gels in as an official product in the community pharmacy.
- Information, request and claim to the Ministry of Health about the needs of our health professionals in terms of having PPEs.
- Monitoring shortages and lack of supply with the AEMPS. Weekly submission of reports on shortages of medicines affected by the COVID-19 situation through our Medicine Supply Information Centre (CISMED).
- Request to the Ministry of Health for price regulation of the masks in order to avoid the speculation pharmacists were suffering.



- Offer for pharmacies to distribute masks to the population, at zero cost and using the health card as a control instrument in the distribution.
- Request for a reduced VAT rate on masks (from the actual 21% to 4%).
- Request to the Ministry of the Interior to reinforce police surveillance of the pharmacy network to prevent robberies.
- Request for the inclusion of pharmacists within the group of health professionals at risk for carrying out the Covid 19 diagnostic tests.
- Request for the inclusion of pharmacists in the Report on the situation of COVID-19 in health care personnel in Spain carried out by the National Network of Epidemiological Surveillance of the Carlos III Health Institute.
- Clarifications on the withdrawal from the pharmaceutical channel of medicines used for the treatment of COVID-19.
- Preparation and submission of the document "Community Pharmacy Proposals to support the national and regional authorities in the Transition Strategy".  
<https://www.portalfarma.com/Profesionales/campanaspf/Asesoramiento-salud-publica/infeccion-coronavirus-2019-nCoV/Documents/24-propuestas-farmacia-comunitaria-estrategia-transicion-coronavirus-covid-19.pdf>

## 2.2 Technical safety initiatives as action protocols in the field of pharmacy

The Pharmacy Representative Bodies have worked on action procedures for community pharmacies with aiming to guarantee the safety of our health professionals, regardless of the area of professional, community or hospital action, in order to ensure our healthcare role in the face of the epidemic outbreak of COVID-19, both during the expansion of the pandemic and the de-escalation period. Two protocols have been developed and kept up to date, an initial one for the containment phase and a second one for the de-escalation phase.

### ✓ **Procedure for action in the community pharmacy for containment of the spread of COVID-19**

To ensure the population the correct functioning of the community pharmacy in terms of pharmaceutical assistance to society and the development of public health actions, avoiding risks associated with the spread of infection, since its service has been considered essential for the population.

<https://www.portalfarma.com/Profesionales/campanaspf/Asesoramiento-salud-publica/infeccion-coronavirus-2019-nCoV/Documents/Procedimiento-actuacion-farmacia-comunitaria-infeccion-covid19.pdf>

✓ **Procedure for action in the Community Pharmacy in light of the gradual de-escalation process of the measures adopted in SARS-CoV-2 infection**

In order to continue their **care work**, the community pharmacies have had to adapt to the **new measures** that the competent authorities have established to ensure a gradual recovery of daily life and economic activity, minimising the risk that the epidemic represents for the health of the population and health professionals.

<https://www.portalfarma.com/Profesionales/campanaspf/Asesoramiento-salud-publica/infeccion-coronavirus-2019-nCoV/Documents/infografia-procedimiento-desescalada-farmacia.pdf>

## **2.3 Training and information initiatives on COVID-19**

The health relevance of the COVID-19 epidemic outbreak has required that the community pharmacy has had to be **adequately informed** according to the degree of **knowledge** of the pandemic in each stage, of the risks that this infection entails in the general population and in the most vulnerable patients, and of the **preventive measures and warning signals**, in order to be able to counsel the population by avoiding unnecessary alarms and thus being able to collaborate with the preventive measures established by the health authorities.

Therefore, in order to keep all our health professionals informed and trained, the Pharmacy Representative Bodies have been sending all the pharmaceutical professionals **updated information** on the situation of COVID-19, taking into account the official recommendations at all times. All this **technical documentation, own reports and information** from the Ministry, have been made available to our professionals in a specific space of Portalfarma, the website of the General Council and the corresponding websites of the Provincial Pharmacists' Chamber

### **2.3.1 Information initiatives**

In order to resolve the doubts of our health professionals and to **keep updated** all the scientific and technical information that has been generated during this period, different **reports and protocols** have been made with a varied subject matter, which have dealt with issues related to the scientific information of the COVID-19 and others more related to our healthcare role in the face of the epidemic outbreak.

A total of **five technical documents** and a summary of frequently asked questions were produced.

- ✓ **Coronavirus technical report.**

During the expansion phase of the pandemic, it has been essential to have **in-depth knowledge** of this pathology in order to inform all professionals about its characteristics, incidence, precautions, etc. This report has been regularly **updated** with the scientific information we have learned during this stage.

<https://www.portalfarma.com/Profesionales/campanaspf/Asesoramiento-salud-publica/infeccion-coronavirus-2019-nCoV/Documents/Informe-tecnico-Coronavirus.pdf>
  
- ✓ **Technical report on COVID-19 and the use of masks.**

The **use of personal protective equipment** (PPEs), its characteristics and the standards for its use have been one of the technical aspects on which most work has been done during this period. A constantly updated **technical report** has been prepared on the use of masks, types and recommendations, with information on the different regulations applicable to all professionals and on the criteria for use.

<https://www.portalfarma.com/Profesionales/campanaspf/Asesoramiento-salud-publica/infeccion-coronavirus-2019-nCoV/Documents/mascarillas-coronavirus.pdf>
  
- ✓ **Protocol Cosmetic compounding in pharmacy of hand sanitizing gel.**

Another relevant issue during the pandemic **containment phase** has been the **availability of pharmaceutical disinfectant products** in order to have this type of product during the pandemic phase. For this reason, in collaboration with the National Committee of Dermopharmacy, a **protocol** was drawn up on the compounding of hydroalcoholic gels as a cosmetic preparation, in order to facilitate their correct **compounding** and **management** by pharmacists.

<https://www.portalfarma.com/Profesionales/campanaspf/Asesoramiento-salud-publica/infeccion-coronavirus-2019-nCoV/Documents/formulacion-cosmetica-farmacia-gel-higienizante-manos.pdf>
  
- ✓ **Technical report on the laboratory diagnosis of SARS-CoV-2.**

Another controversial debate has been the **diagnostic methods** for detecting the virus to ensure control of the spread of the pandemic. Work has been done on a **technical document**, in collaboration with the National Committee of Clinical Analysis, on the various diagnostic tests for the COVID-19 in the laboratory, describing their technical characteristics and indicating the **suitability** of each of them.

<https://www.portalfarma.com/Profesionales/campanaspf/Asesoramiento-salud-publica/infeccion-coronavirus-2019-nCoV/Documents/informe-diagnostico-sars-cov-2.pdf>

✓ **Question and answer paper on coronavirus and COVID-19.**

Pharmacists have been the most accessible health professionals to the population during the expansion phase of COVID-19. Many **questions and doubts** have been raised by the public during this stage, so it has been very important to provide **updated** information in accordance with the state of knowledge and the official recommendations of the health administrations to avoid false alarms or the spread of hoaxes. For this reason, a continuously updated document has been drawn up to resolve professional doubts about COVID-19 and to cover this demand for information.

<https://www.portalfarma.com/Profesionales/campanaspf/Asesoramiento-salud-publica/infeccion-coronavirus-2019-nCoV/Documents/preguntas-respuestas-coronavirus.pdf>

### 2.3.2 Training initiatives

Pharmacy Representative Bodies, with the desire to support all the pharmaceutical health professionals in our country, and those who have requested it from other countries, have generated **training material** that is continuously **updated** to adapt the knowledge of our professionals to the current state of scientific evidence on the COVID-19.

As a whole total, different initiatives have been carried out, marked by an ambitious strategy of training our professionals with all the rigour. The training strategy has had as a fundamental pillar the "Coronavirus Infection" Program with scientific collaborators of first international level. This program has been accompanied by different specific webinars, infographics and support videos on aspects related to COVID-19.

✓ **Program for pharmacists: Coronavirus infection (free)**

This **training activity** has been promoted with a scientific panel of national and international relevance for all the members about the infection by coronavirus and whose documentation has been provided for free for the rest of the health professionals and pharmacists of Latin-American countries.

**More than 20,000 professionals** have accessed this training material, thus reaching a large number of pharmaceutical professionals. The training material consists of **written documentation** and **explanatory videos** on different scientific and technical aspects of COVID-19.

<https://www.portalfarma.com/inicio/formacioncontinuada/cursos/microformacion/Paginas/coronavirus.aspx>

✓ **Webinar on Mask Basics and FAQs**

An online training has been carried out in collaboration with the National Committees of Hospital Pharmacy and Community Pharmacy, where the different types and uses of the masks and their handling are detailed. **More than 3,000 pharmaceutical professionals** participated in this activity.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0TJ6izozQU8>

✓ **Infographics on "Use of COVID-19 masks"**

In parallel and as a complement to the online training on this type of protective equipment, an **infographic** was created in collaboration with the National Committees of Hospital Pharmacy, Pharmaceutical Distribution, community Pharmacy and Orthopedics, to reinforce the key aspects of the use and **handling** of the masks.

<https://www.portalfarma.com/Profesionales/campanaspf/Asesoramiento-salud-publica/infeccion-coronavirus-2019-nCoV/Documents/infografia-uso-mascarillas-coronavirus-covid-19.pdf>

✓ **Infographic on "Diagnostic tests for COVID-19 infection".**

In order to reinforce the knowledge about the **technical characteristics and use** of the different diagnostic tests, an infographic about these types of tests has been prepared in collaboration with the Vocalías Nacional de Analistas Clínicos.

<https://www.portalfarma.com/Profesionales/campanaspf/Asesoramiento-salud-publica/infeccion-coronavirus-2019-nCoV/Documents/infografia-pruebas-diagnosticas-covid-19.pdf>

All these initiatives developed by the Pharmacy Representative bodies have been communicated to the entire professional group every 15 days through our **Newsletter for members**.

## 2.4 Other support initiatives related to the pharmaceutical professional group.

✓ ***Agreement with the Pharmacy Deans' Conference to facilitate the recognition of supervised practices for pharmacy students***

The General Pharmaceutical Council of Spain and the National Conference of Deans of Pharmacy have reached an agreement **to provide students enrolled** in the supervised practice course, which was cancelled due to the coronavirus crisis, with the **online training** necessary to acquire the skills and abilities required to obtain their university degree. In this way, the General Council has set up a specific section within its training platform with more than **15 courses** for students.

<https://www.portalfarma.com/Profesionales/consejoinforma/Paginas/2020-reconocimiento-practicas-tuteladas-estudiantes-farmacia.aspx>

✓ ***Agreement with the Conference of Deans to enable a student job bank to cover casualties and strengthen health care in pharmacies***

The General Pharmaceutical Council of Spain and the Pharmacy Deans' Conference have signed an agreement aiming to **provide a pool of students to cover the human resource needs of pharmacies** during the COVID-19 crisis. The situation of the Community Pharmacy has made it necessary to have additional qualified human resources to **include personnel** who, due to their training in pharmacy, have been able to collaborate **providing care** for the population.

<https://www.portalfarma.com/Profesionales/consejoinforma/Paginas/2020-decanos-bolsa-alumnos-farmacias.aspx>

✓ ***Recording and reporting on the effects of COVID on the pharmaceutical profession***

Based on the data sent by the Provincial Pharmacists' Chambers, a **fortnightly record** is being made of how this pandemic is affecting deaths, the number of people infected or in quarantine and pharmacies closed. This information is being communicated through press releases and video releases.

<https://www.portalfarma.com/Profesionales/consejoinforma/Paginas/2020-registro-afectados-coronavirus-farmacias-comunitarias.aspx>

### 3. Actions aimed at citizens during the COVID-19 pandemic:

These actions respond to the **public service** vocation of the pharmaceutical profession, which in this health emergency has been carrying out **essential health work** in the different practice areas aimed at **patients** and **citizens**, the *raison d'être* of our profession.

#### 3.1 Expansion of care services to guarantee the accessibility of treatment to citizens

Due to the situation of confinement that we have experienced in Spain, there has been a high **reduction in physical attendance** at consultations by patients. For this reason, taking into account that many of them have had to continue to require the **prescription** of certain medicines for the treatment of their pathologies, the Pharmacy Representative Bodies have implemented several agreements to ensure **adequate accessibility** to treatment. For this reason, several agreements have been reached with different **pharmacy organizations and institutions**.

✓ ***Agreement with the General Councils of Dentists, Pharmacists, Doctors and Chiropodists, to enable a simplified version of private Electronic Prescription.***

Through this initiative we have worked together to enable a simplified version of the **Private Electronic Prescription System** with which it has been possible to operate, temporarily and as a contingency solution to the health emergency situation caused by the COVID-19. This solution has facilitated **access to prescribed treatments** with health guarantees for patients.

✓ ***Agreement with the General Councils of Dentists, Pharmacists, Doctors and Chiropodists, to enable an electronic validation system.***

Through this agreement, we have offered the patient the possibility of receiving this type of prescription **by telematic means** without having to go to the surgery, thus being able to go to the pharmacy to pick up the prescribed medication and have the medicine dispensed with **health guarantees**. This procedure is being carried out through a technological platform of the General Pharmaceutical Council, **Nodofarma**, which is an essential element of **security** for professionals and patients.

✓ ***Agreements with the regional health departments for the automatic renewal of electronic prescriptions for chronic patients.***

Through these agreements, the regional health departments have authorized the **automatic renewal** of pharmacological treatments for a longer period of time through electronic prescriptions, allowing **prescriptions to be extended**, thus avoiding patients having to process prescription renewals in primary care centers. Likewise, work has been done on the **exceptional dispensing** in community pharmacies of the medicines and health products needed to complete the treatment (such as test strips

for glycemic control, needles, etc.), in those autonomous regions where these products are only accessible to patients from health centres.

✓ ***Specific agreements with health insurance companies: MUFACE, ISFAS and MUGEJU.***

Work has been done on **specific procedures** to articulate an alternative system so that the mutual insurance companies that receive health care through the Public Health System, in those Autonomous Communities where the electronic prescription was not developed with **MUFACE, ISFAS and MUGEJU**, could **receive their treatments without going to the health centres in person** to obtain their prescriptions. Likewise, a **COVID-19 contingency system** has been put into operation to initiate the prescription to mutualists who have chosen health care through concerted insurance companies.

### **3.2 Expansion of care services, specifically for the most vulnerable population**

In order to ensure **accessibility, continuity** and **adherence** to treatment, and as an exceptional measure before the COVID-19 infection, the Pharmacy Representative Bodies have made **various protocols** available to the health authorities to establish guidelines that guarantee access and continuation of treatment for **vulnerable patients**, avoiding travel and, therefore, unnecessary risks for them.

✓ ***Guidelines to be followed by the community pharmacist to exceptionally facilitate medication to certain patients at their homes.***

The objective has been to ensure the accessibility of the treatments through the **home delivery service** and to provide, exceptionally by the community pharmacists, the treatments to **avoid displacements** and risk of contagion of the most **vulnerable population**. This service has benefited **dependent people** with mobility problems, people with symptoms of COVID-19 infection, people in **home quarantine** for COVID-19 infection, and **complex chronic** patients with respiratory diseases.

<https://www.portalfarma.com/Profesionales/campanaspf/Asesoramiento-salud-publica/infeccion-coronavirus-2019-nCoV/Documents/documento-pautas-entrega-medicamentos-domicilio%20.pdf>



✓ **Agreements and arrangements with non-profit organisations, Caritas and the Red Cross, or other institutions, Law enforcement bodies for home delivery of medicines.**

Through these agreements, a network of more than **100,000 volunteers** has been made available to facilitate the **delivery of medicines** to the **most vulnerable patients** at home when community pharmacies have lacked the material resources to carry out this type of dispensing, thus contributing to solving the citizens' emergency in the period of expansion of the pandemic.

<https://www.portalfarma.com/Profesionales/campanaspf/Asesoramiento-salud-publica/infeccion-coronavirus-2019-nCoV/Documents/nota-aclaratoria-acuerdo-farmaceuticos-cruz-roja-coronavirus-covid-19.pdf>

<https://www.portalfarma.com/Profesionales/campanaspf/Asesoramiento-salud-publica/infeccion-coronavirus-2019-nCoV/Documents/acuerdo-colaboracion-consejo-general-colegios-farmaceuticos-caritas.pdf>

✓ **Exceptional dispensing in Community Pharmacy of hospital-diagnosed medicines with unique reserves**

The Pharmacy Representative Bodies, in collaboration with the Federation of Pharmaceutical Distributors (Fedifar), has offered through this protocol a **more accessible** and **personalized** alternative for **hospital patients** and, in turn, more efficient for the system. This service has avoided unnecessary displacements to hospitals, reducing the risk of COVID-19 infection for the **most vulnerable patients** and relieving pressure from hospitals. In this way, thanks to distribution logistics and pharmacy planning, thousands of patients have been able to pick up these medicines from hospitals at their nearest pharmacy, thus reducing unnecessary risks. More than **7,000 treatments** have already been dispensed through the community pharmacy and a high number of patients have benefited from this initiative.

<https://www.portalfarma.com/Profesionales/campanaspf/Asesoramiento-salud-publica/infeccion-coronavirus-2019-nCoV/Documents/procedimiento-dispensacion-medicamentos-MHDH.pdf>

### 3.3 Social actions carried out through pharmacies

Since well before this health crisis, Pharmacy has put people at the centre of its professional activities. **We work by, for and with the patient.** For this reason, in addition to our work on medicines and the daily exercise of our health functions, we have promoted initiatives to facilitate and help the **most vulnerable population** in order to facilitate their **integration** and **full participation** in society.

In addition, during this time we have held meetings with different **patient associations** in order to seek from the pharmaceutical profession ways of protecting patients during the new phase of decontamination

✓ ***Initiative against gender-based violence during the confinement phase "Mask 19"***

This is an initiative that **arose in the Canary Islands** and has been extended to many Autonomous Communities in order to provide care to **abused women** during confinement. Through a request for a "mask 19" in a community pharmacy a protocol of help is activated by contacting the emergency services. At present, **more than 16,000 pharmacies** have joined this initiative. This initiative has also been replicated in other countries such as **France, Chile and Argentina.**

<https://www.portalfarma.com/Profesionales/consejoinforma/Paginas/2020-mascarilla-19-respuestas-farmacias-violencia-genero.aspx>

✓ ***Collaboration agreement with the Secretary of State for Security of the Ministry of the Interior***

The Secretariat of State for Security of the Ministry of the Interior and the General Pharmaceutical Council of Spain (CGCOF) have signed a collaboration agreement under which the pharmaceutical profession has exchanged information and efforts to detect persons belonging to **vulnerable groups** who have stopped taking their usual medication, a sign that they **may need help.** For this purpose, they have had the **collaboration of the community pharmacy network** during this health crisis, taking advantage of the accessibility, proximity and trust of citizens in community pharmacies.

✓ ***Round of meetings with patients' associations***

The objective of these meetings has been to learn about the **concerns** and **needs** of the main **patients' associations** in order to seek solutions, such as adherence to treatment at this time, or to establish **concrete initiatives** to prevent any patient from being left without their treatment. Other measures for de-escalation and the new normality have also been agreed upon.

<https://www.portalfarma.com/Profesionales/consejoinforma/Paginas/2020-reunion-consejo-general-farmaceuticos-pop.aspx>

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:6661270052085596160/>

### 3.4 Information and dissemination initiatives aimed at the population.

**Training and information** for the general public is one of the objectives of the Pharmacy Representative Bodies. During this phase of the pandemic, it has been essential that the public was to obtain **solid and quality information** to resolve their doubts and concerns.

For this reason, **6 infographics, more than 10 informative videos and a question and answer document** aimed at the population have been produced.

#### 3.4.1 Infographics aimed at the population

Information on the pathology, aimed at the general population with the **objective of providing general information on the disease**, advices to avoid its spread, precautions to be taken during the confinement phase...

✓ ***Infographics "Pharmacy poster on COVID-19".***

Information on the pathology, aimed at the general population with the **objective of providing general information on the disease**, advices to avoid its spread, precautions to be taken during the confinement phase...

<https://www.portalfarma.com/Profesionales/campanaspf/Asesoramiento-salud-publica/infeccion-coronavirus-2019-nCoV/Documents/cartel-farmacias-coronavirus-covid19.pdf>

✓ ***"Cuándo y cómo utilizar mascarillas" Infographics "COVID-19. When and how to use masks".***

Document in collaboration with the National Committees of Hospital Pharmacy, Community Pharmacy and Distribution about **types of masks**, ways to use those, recommendations...

<https://www.portalfarma.com/Profesionales/campanaspf/Asesoramiento-salud-publica/infeccion-coronavirus-2019-nCoV/Documents/infografia-uso-mascarillas-coronavirus-covid-19.pdf>

✓ ***Infographics "Food and coronavirus infection COVID-19".***

In collaboration with the National Pharmacy Committee on Food about recommendations on nutrition for the general population in the COVID-19 pandemic and the influence of a **healthy lifestyle** on this pathology.

<https://www.portalfarma.com/Profesionales/campanaspf/Asesoramiento-salud-publica/infeccion-coronavirus-2019-nCoV/Documents/infografia-alimentacion-infeccion-coronavirus-covid-19.pdf>

✓ **Infographic "COVID-19. Can I wear contact lenses?"**

In collaboration with the National Committee of Ophthalmic Optics and Audiometric Acoustics regarding cleaning, conservation, **handling of contact lenses** for the population for the use of contact lenses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

<https://www.portalfarma.com/Profesionales/campanaspf/Asesoramiento-salud-publica/infeccion-coronavirus-2019-nCoV/Documents/infografia-lentes-contacto-covid-19.pdf>

✓ **Infographics on "Cleaning Glasses and COVID-19"**

In collaboration with the National Committee of Ophthalmic Optics and Audiometric Acoustics, to recommend the **care of glasses** and their disinfection and maintenance during the pandemic phase.

<https://www.portalfarma.com/Profesionales/campanaspf/Asesoramiento-salud-publica/infeccion-coronavirus-2019-nCoV/Documents/infografia-como-puedo-limpiar-mis-gafas-covid-19.pdf>

✓ **Card in social networks about "COVID-19 upon the pandemic phase where children were allowed to be outside their homes "**

In collaboration with the National Committees of Dermatology, Optics and Food, on **basic recommendations in the de-escalation phase.**

[https://www.instagram.com/p/B\\_ZoXcGCMej/](https://www.instagram.com/p/B_ZoXcGCMej/)

### **3.4.2 Video health advice and documents for the public**

**A series of short videos** (14 so far) have been produced for the general public, on specific aspects of **generic information** on COVID-19, **personal protective equipment**, clarification of **hoaxes** about this pathology and the use of certain medicines in this pathology, among others.

✓ **Video advice for the youtube channel "Tu Farmacéutico Informa" (Your Pharmacist Informs)**

["What types of masks are available and when is their use recommended?"](#)

["Hygiene masks. What do you need to know?"](#)

["How to put on and take off your masks properly."](#)

["What should you do to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus?"](#)

["State of Alarm. Recommendations if you have to go to the pharmacy".](#)

"Let's stop hoaxes about the coronavirus. Advice from the pharmacy."

"Do paracetamol, ibuprofen or antibiotics work against coronavirus?"

"What do they mean when they talk of antibiotics such as azithromycin to treat the coronavirus?"

"What basic first-aid kit should we have for a possible case of coronavirus?"

"Chloroquine, hydroxychloroquine and coronavirus, what do you need to know?"

"Remdesivir and coronavirus. What do you need to know?"

"Lopinavir and Ritonavir likely treatments for coronavirus"

✓ ***Question and answer paper on coronavirus and COVID-19***

Material to help **solve the doubts** of the general population about COVID-19. It is offered for a series of **questions and answers** focused on general population, as well as some **advice on some fake news and hoaxes** about the pathology.

<https://www.portalfarma.com/Profesionales/campanaspf/Asesoramiento-salud-publica/infeccion-coronavirus-2019-nCoV/Paginas/preguntas-respuestas.aspx>

### **3.4.3 Surveys, campaigns and actions on mass media**

✓ ***Survey on the Role of the Pharmacy in the COVID-19 Crisis***

Initiative to gather **information** on the value of community pharmacy taking into account the initiative capacity of the network in providing **essential services**, such as pharmaceutical care, accessibility to treatment or as a source of information during the health emergency.

<https://www.portalfarma.com/Profesionales/campanaspf/Asesoramiento-salud-publica/infeccion-coronavirus-2019-nCoV/Documents/encuesta-gad3-papel-farmacia-crisis-covid-19.pdf>

✓ ***The #Pharmacy Cross does never go out' campaign***

**Informative action** aimed at citizens that includes videos, tweets, opinion articles... to make the public aware of the **value and work** of the pharmacist as the **most accessible** health professional and of the network of 22,071 pharmacies as the **closest health resource**, without an appointment or a waiting list.

<https://somos.farmaceuticos.com/la-cruz-de-la-farmacia-no-se-apaqa/>

✓ **Support videos for pharmacists in social networks**

Actions aimed at pharmaceutical professionals about the COVID-19 infection to acknowledge from the Pharmacy Representative Bodies the extraordinary **work of all the pharmaceutical profession** through **generic videos** and by activities of professional practice: industry, distribution, hospital, clinical analysis...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yFmqZRb89EI>

✓ **Actions with the media**

The General Council has done a lot of reporting during this time and has become a source of **rigor** in dealing with all media inquiries. In addition, the Council has **spoken up** for the work of the pharmacists and has provided citizens with clear answers to all the questions they have asked us through the media.

Throughout the pandemic, the General Council has implemented a **communication strategy**, both internal and external. Internally, it aims to **promote the participation** of pharmacists in all **training, care and prevention activities**. In external communication, the aim is to **reach all the population** in order to make known the health education of the pharmacy and disseminate all the work that the General Council itself and the Pharmaceutical Profession are carrying out.

<https://www.portalfarma.com/Profesionales/campanaspf/Asesoramiento-salud-publica/infeccion-coronavirus-2019-nCoV/Paginas/comunicacion.aspx>

✓ **Media impact**

This intense activity has had a **significant impact** on the media, placing the pharmacy as a **constant news source** during **March** and **April** and the General Council as a **reference source**. During March and April, the General Council generated more than **400 news items** in all types of media, press, television and radio, reaching an audience of **more than 65 million people**.

<https://www.portalfarma.com/Profesionales/campanaspf/Asesoramiento-salud-publica/infeccion-coronavirus-2019-nCoV/Documents/2020-impacto-consejo-medios-4-10-abril.pdf>

## 4. Actions at international level

During the pandemic phase, the Pharmacy Representative Bodies have been working at international level on the **detection and monitoring of measures taken** by the authorities and pharmacy organizations both at European and global level. It has also compiled all the **guidelines and recommendations** of the main international reference bodies and has promoted the exchange of information on **action plans and best practices** of the main national and international pharmaceutical organisations, with the aim of assessing their adaptation to the Spanish context and strengthening the implementation in Spain of measures which have proven their effectiveness in terms of viability in other countries in our **European and international environment**.

### ✓ **International Vision of Spanish Pharmacy**

In order to contribute to the **visibility** of the actions carried out by the Spanish Pharmacy at **international level**, highlighting especially those actions where it is a pioneer, as in the case of **social and digital actions**, the Pharmacy Representative Bodies have presented some actions carried out in Spain such as the "Mask 19" Campaign in the EU Pharmaceutical Group (PGEU).

It has also participated in the **working groups** and in the preparation of **joint documents** with PGEU and FIP:

- *World Pharmacy Council Statement "Pandemic Preparedness - Optimising the Use of the Pharmacy Network"*
- *"Overview COVID-19 measures PGEU"*
- *"Overview of economic responses to Covid-19 outbreak"*
- *"PGEU overview of the expansion of community pharmacy services/activities in relation to COVID-19", FIP Covid-19 Information Hub.*

### ✓ **Participation in webinars: Webinar "COVID-19 and the Global Experience"**

Intervention at a session organized by the Canadian Pharmacists Association to learn about and analyze experiences of other countries in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic.

<https://www.pharmacists.ca/education-practice-resources/professional-development/pharmacy-practice-webinars/the-covid-conversations/>

### ✓ **Webinar Spanish and Latin American Pharmacy versus COVID-19: experiences from pharmaceutical organizations.**

Session organized by the Argentinean Pharmaceutical Confederation.

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/la-actitud-constructiva-de-farmacia-iberoamericana-jes%C3%BAs/>