



Emergency Preparedness – Modifications to Pharmacy Operations and Hours

DEFINITIONS

“**Pharmacy team**” for the purpose of this document includes licensed pharmacists, licensed technicians, pharmacy interns, pharmacy assistants and other support staff required for the safe and regular operations of the pharmacy.

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. During a state of emergency, or pandemic as declared by provincial or federal authorities, pharmacies may be required to stay open and may not be able to continue operating in the same capacity as the practice environment changes.

Despite the circumstance, **maintaining safe public care remains the utmost importance. It is the responsibility of the pharmacy manager and proprietor** to evaluate each situation they encounter and respond in the best interest of their patients and the public, while maintaining the health and safety of the pharmacy team.

This document outlines steps to follow in the event pharmacy managers and proprietors deem it necessary to adjust pharmacy operations or operating hours.

Modifying Pharmacy Operations and Hours vs. Pharmacy Closure

It is recognized that some pharmacies may adjust their operations to continue providing pharmacy services to the public **but** are doing so in different ways. For example:

- Reserving certain times of day to serve vulnerable members of the public vs general public;
- Locking the door, or restricting hours that pharmacy is “open to the public”, so that the pharmacy team can fill prescriptions and provide other pharmacy services that do not involve direct patient contact OR to provide direct patient care such as administering the seasonal influenza vaccine.

These are not considered a pharmacy closure but rather a modification to operations or operating hours.

Pharmacy managers must [notify SCPP of any changes](#) in the operations or management of the pharmacy, and [update the SCPP Pharmacy database](#), if the change is expected to be in place for over 6 weeks.

2. POLICY

2.1. In the event that circumstances prevent regular pharmacy operations, pharmacy managers/proprietors may make the following adjustments to maintain access to pharmacy services in the community:

2.1.1. **Reduction of Pharmacy Hours** – In the event the pharmacy team is short staffed and unable to safely maintain regular operating hours, the pharmacy manager may consider reducing operating hours to accommodate the capacity of the pharmacy team.

2.1.2. **Operating Outside of Regular Pharmacy Hours** – When the result of increased volume or reduced pharmacy team members prevent the pharmacy from completing regular pharmacy operations safely and in a reasonable timely manner, the pharmacy manager may continue basic operations (e.g. data entry, filling prescriptions) before or after regular operating hours. The pharmacy manager must continue to ensure:

2.1.2.1. **A licensed pharmacist** is on site at all times;

2.1.2.2. Where possible, two or more pharmacy staff or otherwise a pharmacist and store employee, are present in the pharmacy when providing direct patient care to ensure safety of the public and the member. (e.g. anaphylactic reactions to vaccines and avoiding unsafe situations such as robbery or assault) and

2.1.2.3. Lock and leaves must be in place if non-pharmacy staff are in the building.

2.1.3. **Restricted Pharmacy Hours for Vulnerable Populations** – The pharmacy manager may restrict specific hours of the pharmacy to be open to vulnerable populations only (e.g. elderly, or immunocompromised patients) to ensure continued patient care if needed. The pharmacy manager must ensure that:

2.1.3.1. All team members are aware of the restrictions to help enforce and protect vulnerable patients utilizing these hours.

2.2. Pharmacy managers must ensure that arrangements have been made to ensure that pharmaceutical care continues, for patients impacted by the emergency situation or changes in pharmacy operations. This includes, but is not limited to:

2.2.1. All impacted patients are notified of these arrangements or accommodations.

2.2.2. In a single-pharmacy community, alternate arrangements must be made with local prescribers or hospital/health centre or pharmacies in nearby communities.

Essential vs. Non-Essential Pharmacy Services

During a time of limited resources in an emergency situation, the pharmacy manager should evaluate and determine essential and non-essential pharmacy services.

Services that are non-essential (e.g. medication assessments) may be deferred in order to maintain essential services (e.g. regular dispensing operations).

Reducing Impact to Patients

With any reduction of pharmacy hours or other changes in pharmacy operations, the pharmacy manager must account for patients that rely on essential regular or scheduled services (e.g. daily witnesses of opioid agonist therapy) and make alternate arrangements to ensure continued patient care.

When reducing pharmacy operating hours, pharmacy managers are strongly encouraged to work together and coordinate with other local pharmacies to stagger hours of operation such that pharmacy services are available to the public for as long as possible in the impacted area(s).

- 2.3. Pharmacy managers and proprietors are expected to exhaust all efforts to modify pharmacy operations and/or pharmacy hours to maintain pharmacy services to the community, prior to pursuing pharmacy closures.
- 2.4. In the event that a pharmacy is no longer operational due to lack of staff, the pharmacy manager or proprietor may elect to temporarily close the pharmacy. See the SCPP's [Temporary Pharmacy Closures Policy](#) for more information.

Temporary Pharmacy Closure as Last Resort

The closure of a pharmacy should be the absolute last resort a pharmacy manager and the pharmacy team consider. Aside from prescription medications, pharmacies provide essential services, education, and access to over-the-counter medications not accessible elsewhere (Schedule II and III drugs).

The **safety and best interests of the public** must be weighed heavily to open or close a pharmacy and will be dependant on each unique emergency situation.

3. PROCEDURE

- 3.1. In the event that the pharmacy manager or proprietor adjusts pharmacy operations and/or hours of operation they must:
 - 3.1.1. Notify SCPP as soon as possible in writing, detailing the changes and the stores impacted for updates to the SCPP website;

3.1.2. Amend the dispensary and premise hours in the SCPP database, instructions can be found in the [Modifying Pharmacy Hours of Operations Procedures](#) tab **if the modification is expected to be in place longer than 6 weeks. If the modification is for 6 weeks or less, then no amendments are needed in the database;**

3.1.3. Notify the public by posting signage at the store entrance and a telephone messaging system, and other means (e.g. posters in other locations, public announcement, social media, and pharmacy website) advising the public:

- The changes to operations and store hours;
- The duration of the changes; and
- Other information about arrangements made to ensure that patients and the public continue to receive necessary pharmacy services during this period.

4. RESOURCES

- 4.1. [SCPP Emergency Preparedness Tools](#)
- 4.2. [SCPP Emergency Preparedness Resource Kit for Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians](#)
- 4.3. [Ethical Duty During an Emergency, Disaster or Pandemic for Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians](#)
- 4.4. [SCPP Code of Ethics](#)
- 4.5. [NAPRA Model Standards of Practice for Canadian Pharmacists](#)
- 4.6. [NAPRA Model Standards of Practice for Canadian Pharmacy Technicians](#)