COVID-19 Response Efforts - March 16, 2020

The State of Ohio Board of Pharmacy is committed to protecting the health and safety of Ohioans during the COVID-19 outbreak. The Board posted a document on its website that provides COVID-19 guidance and response efforts, including the issuance of waivers to assist licensees in addressing operational needs. This document will be updated regularly and can be accessed by visiting: www.pharmacy.ohio.gov/COVID. **Please be advised that new waivers were issued today (see below).**

For more information on the state's efforts to address coronavirus, visit www.coronavirus.ohio.gov.

New COVID-19 Waivers Issued

- Authorized automatic exemptions to rule authorizing the compounding of drugs in shortage (4729-16-10) and expands the definition of drug shortage. This guidance can be accessed here.

- Authorized the extension of emergency refills. This guidance can be accessed here.

Practicing Pharmacy in a Safe and Effective Manner During COVID-19

Section 4729.55 of the Revised Code requires a pharmacy to implement adequate safeguards that allow pharmacy professionals employed by a terminal distributor to practice pharmacy in a safe and effective manner. This includes implementing ODH recommended safeguards to protect pharmacy professionals (pharmacists, interns, technician, and support personnel) and patients during a public health emergency.

The Board strongly encourages all Ohio-licensed pharmacies to implement the following safeguards to ensure the practice of pharmacy can be conducted in a safe and effective manner:

- Establish a process for older adults, pregnant women, and individuals with chronic health conditions to pick up medications without waiting in line.
- Implement infection control procedures, especially for waiting areas, to include the following:
    - Make sure staff maintain a distance of 3 feet from asymptomatic patients and at least 6 feet from those actively coughing (see *Important COVID-19 Reminders* section of the Board's response efforts document for more information on establishing alternative distribution methods for patients [i.e. curbside pickup, drive-thru, etc.]).
    - Pharmacies with workspaces that allow patients to get closer than the recommended distance should be posting signage or utilizing other methods to ensure patients are maintained at a safe distance.
    - Pharmacists should also use their professional judgement, including the availability of universal precautions, to determine if it is appropriate to administer immunizations or other medications.
    - Regularly clean and disinfect counters, credit/debit card devices, waiting areas, and other spaces where public interaction occurs with an EPA-approved disinfectant. Clean at least every hour or after every 10 patients, whichever is more frequent. If cleaning and disinfecting products are in short supply, the Ohio Department of Health has developed the following guidance: https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/covid-19/home/covid-19-checklists/cleaning-disinfecting-alternatives-covid-19-checklist
    - If available, place alcohol-based hand sanitizer next to the checkout window so people can sanitize their hands after using common items, like the pen used to sign for prescriptions or devices used to process credit/debit card transactions. **REMINDER:** Manual signatures from patients are not required by Board of Pharmacy rule (see *Important COVID-19 Reminders* section of the Board's response efforts document).
    - Provide regular breaks for staff to engage in proper hand hygiene (i.e. routinely washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds).
- Monitor all staff for sickness regularly. Take temperatures once per shift and send them

home if they have symptoms of a respiratory infection.

Important COVID-19 Reminders

The Board has issued additional guidance based upon questions received from licensees. This additional guidance is listed under the *Important COVID-19 Reminders* section of the Board's [response efforts document](#).