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Media release

Relief on the way for pandemic pressured pharmacy teams

Some well-earned respite will soon be available for community pharmacy teams who have been at the front line of the COVID-19 pandemic response since it started in March.

The Pharmacy Council will administer a \$1.7 million fund set up by the Ministry of Health to provide relief to over-stretched pharmacy teams.

Pharmacy Council Chief Executive Michael Pead says this funding is being targeted to pharmacy teams who are under the greatest pressure and with limited other avenue for support. The criteria being used to target funding in the first instance include:

- working in a community pharmacy,
- providing services to areas with Māori and/or Pacific people and/or high needs
- possibly working as a sole practitioner, and
- those working in independent pharmacy settings.

“The pandemic has seen community pharmacists adjusting to many changes since they were thrust into the front line of the COVID-19 pandemic response, recognised from the outset as essential workers. The care of their patients has been paramount in their efforts to provide continuity of services to their communities”, says Michael Pead.

The workflow in community pharmacies has had to be restructured as a result of the pandemic. While this has slowed the delivery of services to the public, the high level of safety and professionalism have been maintained.

“Pharmacists have continued to provide essential services to their patients under considerable pressure. The Pharmacy Council is pleased it has the opportunity to help make a real difference to the profession,” he says.

For pharmacists, like for most New Zealanders, the pandemic has caused a shift in work and home life that has not been previously experienced.

The fund will be targeted to those most in need of some personal time out and/or assistance to catch up on pharmacist and technician work which has accumulated as a result of the COVID pandemic.

The Pharmacy Council is currently finalising some of the required operational processes. Information and application forms will be sent out to pharmacists within the week.

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