

# PHARMACY COUNCIL UPDATE

3 February 2022

## COVID-19 pharmacist relief workforce, Wakaminenga Health Council and COVID-19 boosters

Kia ora koutou

The following update provides you with some important information about measures we are putting in place to help support pharmacists impacted by the Omicron outbreak. These include an expression of interest process to build a relieving workforce list, as well as a contact email for pharmacies needing relieving pharmacists due to the spread of COVID-19.

We have two information updates from the Ministry of Health for you too.

I appreciate these are challenging times for everyone. Thank you for the exemplary work the sector is doing to support public and community wellbeing and safety.

Ngā mihi

Michael Pead, Chief Executive

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### COVID-19 pharmacist relief workforce

There is widespread concern that the spread of the Omicron COVID-19 variant in the weeks to come will have a significant impact on all workforces, including in the health system.

We are assisting the Ministry of Health in their efforts to identify measures to minimise the impact on the pharmacy profession's ability to provide services where pharmacists are over worked and/or themselves are required to self-isolate because they have COVID-19 or are a close contact.

#### Expression of interest process

To this end, Council is initiating the issuing of emergency practising certificates to non-practising pharmacists to enable a list of relief pharmacists to be collated to fill positions in pharmacy at short notice.

We are also looking for expression of interests from pharmacists with extra capacity to work.

If you:

- hold a practising certificate and have extra capacity to work, or
- are non-practising and have held a practising certificate and practised within the past three years,

please [complete our online form](#).

If you do not hold a current practising certificate, you will be required to complete a formal application form at the time we plan to issue an emergency practising certificate to you. This will happen as we receive requests for support and are able to best match people to demand for additional support. The emergency practising certificate would be valid for three months.

**Please take note:** An emergency practising certificate will not be issued for the purpose of working as a vaccinator, and practise under an emergency practising certificate will not be recognised for the purposes of returning to practice.

### Pharmacy requesting assistance

If you and/or the pharmacy you are working in has a need for additional or relieving pharmacists due to the spread of the Omicron COVID-19 variant, please email us directly with:

- pharmacy name
- contact person name
- phone number
- email address
- DHB region your pharmacy is in.

Email us at: [covid-19pharmacycouncil@pharmacycouncil.org.nz](mailto:covid-19pharmacycouncil@pharmacycouncil.org.nz)

### Pharmacy students

Pharmacy students may be able to act as a source of additional workforce support.

The Medicines Regulations 1984 does not prevent a pharmacy student from working in a pharmacy outside of university placements.

However, the practice of a pharmacy student must be supervised by a pharmacist (who is covered by the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act) and the student must only practice within the limits of their training and competence. This may include preparing medicines (including compounding) for final check, assisting with stock management, and conducting basic patient consultations.

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### Wakaminenga Health Council

The Ministry of Health Manatū Hauora has made us aware of a body called the Wakaminenga Kaunihera Hauora Health Council (WHC) which is posing as an official registration entity for New Zealand pharmacists and other professions. The Ministry has received multiple enquiries regarding the validity of WHC and has contacted them directly about their activity. WHC has no authority to act in this way.

The [Pharmacy Council](#) is the only regulatory body that can legitimately register and authorise pharmacists to practise in Aotearoa New Zealand. Without an annual practising certificate from the Pharmacy Council, a pharmacist who practises would be liable to prosecution.

- For more information refer to sections 15 and 26 of the [Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003](#).

WHC has also been offering exemptions to health professionals mandated to be vaccinated against COVID-19. It has no authority to do this. Only the Minister of Health may grant an exemption and only the Director-General of Health may deem a person exempt under the public health response regulations.

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## **Mandated COVID-19 booster for health professionals due 15 February 2022**

The Government has updated its mandatory vaccination orders, requiring all health and disability workers to have their COVID-19 booster vaccination by 15 February 2022.

If you are not eligible for a booster by 15 February 2022 (because three months has not passed since your second vaccination), you are required to have your booster dose within six months of completing your primary vaccinations. The Ministry of Health recommends you have your booster as soon as the three months has passed (except those under 18 years because the booster doses are not approved by Medsafe for this age group). Similar to the initial mandate, there are stringent processes for exemptions and exceptions.

Though primarily an employment matter, the Ministry of Health will investigate breaches of the Order, and the Pharmacy Council is required to pass on information received about possible non-compliance.

Information about these changes is available on the [Ministry of Health's website](#).

- [Read the COVID-19 Public Health Response \(Vaccinations\) Amendment Order 2022](#).