

## **Introduction**

In a series of meetings (between 1988 and 1997) organized by the World Health Organization (WHO), in collaboration with the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP), the role of the pharmacist in the healthcare system has been identified. It was recognized that pharmacists have the responsibility to provide informed and objective advice on medicines and their use, to promote the concept of pharmaceutical care, and to actively participate in illness prevention and health promotion. Therefore, the role of pharmacists in healthcare should extend beyond the supply and management of medications and embrace the societal responsibility of enhancing public health through public education.

Following requests from and subsequent discussions with the Western Pacific regional office of the World Health Organization, the Forum has produced this statement of principle.

## **The Statement**

The multi-disciplinary training of pharmacists places them in an ideal position to be involved in public health activities. Being part of a healthcare system, pharmacists can take leadership in influencing policies that concern public health. In addition, the easy accessibility of the pharmacists in the community is real for them to be engaged in more patient directed activities for health promotion. Henceforth, the Western Pacific Pharmaceutical Forum takes the stand that

*“Pharmacists shall take a proactive role in collaborating with other agencies in policy development concerning public health. Pharmacists shall advise and educate the general and targeted population on how to prevent diseases and promote good health through suitable lifestyle or behavioral modifications, and/or safe and proper use of medication or devices by which even means is more appropriate for the best outcome.”*

## **Contribution of Pharmacists to Public Health**

The WPPF advocates that for pharmacists to contribute effectively to public health, the following recommendations may be considered:

*That the National Pharmaceutical Associations can:*

- Take the leadership in partnering with governments, communities, organizations and similar interest groups in identifying public health problems and policy development.
- Provide relevant continuing education or continuing professional development activities to enhance the competence of pharmacists in offering public health care services.
- Promote the role of pharmacists in advising and educating the general or targeted population on the prevention of diseases and maintenance of good health.

*That the individual pharmacist may strive to provide consumer directed public health services such as:*

- Advising the public on safe and responsible self-care to achieve good health. Self-care will include the adoption of non-drug approaches (like lifestyle or behavioral changes) and appropriate self-medication.
- Providing health education, care management and primary care to individuals and families who are members of vulnerable population and high-risk groups.
- Providing essential professional input to interdisciplinary programmes that monitor, anticipate and respond to public health problems in targeted population groups.
- Identifying and evaluating health trends and risk factors of population groups and helping to determine priorities for targeted intervention.

That in order to equip future pharmacists with the necessary knowledge and skills to provide public health services, pharmacy schools must consider including relevant subjects in their curriculum. It is recommended that the subjects be taught by problem-based learning and the following topics are to be included as part of the pharmacy practice curriculum:

- Epidemiology (including pharmacoepidemiology)
- Healthcare policy
- Behavioral and social sciences

- Nutrition
- Health promotion and disease prevention
- Physical condition assessment
- Emergency first-aid care
- Self-care and self-medication
- Evidence based drug information and literature evaluation
- Communication and advocacy skills

That to better equip future pharmacists to play a more effective role within their national healthcare system in providing public health services, schools must also consider including the following subjects in their pharmacy curriculum.

- National Medicine Policy
- National Essential Medicine List or formulary
- Evidence-based Drug Selection
- Pharmaceutical Management
- Pharmaceutical Financing and Cost Efficiency
- Rational Use of Medicines