



A PUBLIC DECLARATION OF THE FILIPINO PHARMACISTS' COMMITMENT TO PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Philippine Pharmacists Association (PPhA) is a national organization of more than 18,000 pharmacists, the mother organization of 10 affiliate organizations representing pharmacists working in different areas of practice, and 85 local chapters located in all regions of the country. In the light of the passing of R.A. 10918, also known as the Pharmacy Act of 2016, PPhA publicly declares the collective and resolute intention of pharmacists in serving the Filipino people, not only in making available safe, efficacious, quality, and affordable medicines but also in exercising their duties and responsibilities as health care professionals given the stronger mandate of the new law. The scope of practice in the law expands the role of the pharmacist to include services that will directly benefit patients and populations such as clinical pharmacy services, drug information service, patient medication counseling, health promotion and safe administration of selected adult vaccines, to name a few.

Pharmacy practice in other countries had already shown the benefits of involving pharmacists in primary health care, medication management and medication adherence interventions in terms of cost-savings and achievement of patient health outcomes. For the Philippines, there is much to be done to improve the quality of pharmacy services to be at par with global standards. It entails acknowledgment of gaps in both practice and education, a systematic approach in filling these gaps, and innovative leadership to pursue change. Change in pharmacy landscape will critically rest on strategic collaboration with the government, professional organizations, employers, patient groups and the community at large.

In our desire to optimize our contribution to health care, current reforms are being undertaken by different groups in the pharmacy sector:

- The updating of the Policies, Standards and Guidelines for Pharmacy Education to comply with ASEAN and global standards was finished under the Commission on Higher Education.
- PPhA developed standards for professional practice, the Philippine Practice Standards for Pharmacists (PhilPSP) which gained the approval of the Regulatory Board for Pharmacy of the Professional Regulation Commission.
- PPhA had started advocacies that will support government health programs, such as Rational Use of Medicines – Antimicrobial Stewardship and Pharmacy DOTS

Initiatives, Smoking Cessation, Pharmacy-based Immunization, Health Promotion, and Medication Adherence.

- PPhA will continuously pursue competency-building and re-tooling of pharmacists and develop specific protocols and guidelines for the initial programs it had adopted.
- It is also PPhA's priority to help strengthen the public pharmaceutical supply chain management, particularly through policy development and capacity-building.

To help the government in its health agenda, we truly need the support and guidance of our regulating government agencies. We pray that government issuances, rather than discourage, should be supportive of our mission to meet the great challenge of positive change before us.

The FDA Advisory No. 2017-131 is an issuance that warns the public against accessing unauthorized immunization programs, and other unauthorized community programs sponsored by drugstores. While PPhA agrees with the mentioned requirements of pharmacy-based immunization services, the inclusion of community-based services in the issuance may project a negative view of our efforts to support government health priorities and erode public confidence in our profession. The proper context for the issuance should have been included. In addition, there should be clear distinction between basic pharmacy services from specialized services, the latter of which will require authorization from the government agency that rightfully regulates pharmacy practice.

In a country where limited health resources should be optimized due to increasing demand and where an exodus of health professionals to other countries exists, there is a need to inspire and harness the full potentials of those who opted to stay and selflessly serve the society. As professionals educated to contribute to health care, pharmacists are now stepping up, asserting and innovating its role in response to the ever complex and changing health needs of the Filipino people.

PHILIPPINE PHARMACISTS ASSOCIATION, INC.

Pharmacists for Better Health Outcomes