



EDITORIAL

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COVID-19 Pandemic. New challenge for hospital pharmacy services

Pandemia COVID-19. Un nuevo desafío para los servicios de farmacia hospitalaria

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When in 2008 a large panel of experts of the Spanish Society of Hospital Pharmacy (SEFH) created the 2020 workgroup "Towards future with safety"¹, which strategic lines were intended to improve pharmaceutical practice and health systems, we could not even imagine that we would face a terrible pandemic or foresee what this end of the strategic plan would mean for pharmacy services.

This situation has made it essential that hospital pharmacists and all SFH support staff, as a team highly cohesive and efficient. Reinvention was necessary to urgently respond to the overwhelming number of patients and to the problem of scarcity of human and material resources. This situation led hospital pharmacy services (HPS) to correct and face their weaknesses while the strengths developed over the years were maintained and exploited.

Numerous innovative strategies have been necessary to make it possible that HPS are able to do their work during the pandemic. HPS have played a crucial role in arranging the procurement of medicines in shortage, and provide medicines to alleviate the suffering of COVID-19 patients, working closely with all health professionals to fight this unprecedented health crisis.

The efficient response of HPS professionals during the pandemic has brought out the leadership and adaptability of HPS in meeting the needs of outpatients and inpatients. Thus, HPS have guaranteed the availability and safety of medicines in a setting where essential drugs are frequently in shortage. In close cooperation with other health professionals, pharmacists have made their best to relieve the suffering of COVID-19 patients in the battle against this extraordinary health crisis. Moreover, HPS have successfully protected their professionals by facilitating telecommuting or rotating shifts.

The American Pharmacist Association recently recognized the need to prepare pharmacists for the management of Covid-19 patients². The SEFH Steering Board and Editorial board of the journal *Farmacia Hospitalaria* deem it necessary to highlight the work done by HPS in Spain. To such purpose, we launch this special issue "The COVID-19 pandemic: A new challenge to pharmacy services" to share the most representative experiences of different HPS and present the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This issue is structured around different topics, namely:

Organization and management of hospital pharmacies. We report the experience of a tertiary and an intermediate-complexity hospital of the Community of Madrid.

The logistics of drug and medical device procurement to ensure quality procurement, mitigate shortage, and manage donations.

The key role of pharmacists in multidisciplinary teams in the selection, standardization, and follow-up of treatments for SARS-COV-2. To such purpose, pharmacists analyzed the therapeutic strategies available in a context of scarce scientific evidence or in off-label indications, while considering ethic and legal aspects.

Pharmaceutical care for hospitalized and patients in nursing homes is analyzed in relation to the validation of the treatment with safety and effectiveness criteria. Relevant activities include monitoring drug-to-drug interactions, performing surveillance of adverse reactions, substituting missing medicines, facilitating safer alternative methods for drug administration, monitoring treatment in chronic patients, and risk management.

Electronic order prescription and supported clinical decision-making have been crucial to quality and safe prescriptions from different specialists treating COVID-19 patients.

Drug Compounding is a key strategy of added value that facilitates the provision of individualized treatments and centralization of intravenous solutions.

The logistics of safe drug dispensing and storage in hospital wards and other facilities such as field hospitals, hotels fitted with medical equipment, nursing homes, and assisted-living facilities. We also report the experience of the IFEMA hospital in Madrid to illustrate the setting up of a pharmacy service to face a public health crisis.



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The duties and responsibilities of pharmacists embedded in emergency care units, intensive care units and Programs for optimizing the use of antibiotics in hospital wards.

Telepharmacy and pharmacy services for outpatients. We share the experiences of several HPS in Spain and describe how door-to-door medication delivery and teleconsultation have made it possible that chronic patients in quarantine received their treatments and had access to pharmaceutical advice, which promoted treatment adherence by the use of videos, chats, among other communication channels.

The role of the pharmacist in clinical research teams, their relevant role in the development of clinical trials with drugs and other observational studies in a scenario of uncertainty caused by the lack of scientific evidence.

Finally, we address continuing education through virtual platforms, which has enabled pharmacists to keep up to date.

We thank all authors for the excellent work done in a record time. Without their collaboration, this special issue would not have been possible.

We are certain and afraid that many enriching experiences have been left untold. We aimed to focus on the experiences lived in the regions of Spain most severely hit by the pandemic.

Finally, we want to highlight the effort that SEFH has made to collect scientific information on COVID-19³ on its website. Thus, updated information is provided in real time to help professionals keep up to date as new data on the pandemic appears.

Once again, SFH have demonstrated their professional competence, team work skills, and the ability of human being to respond to a limit situation as the one lived these days.

We have learned numerous lessons as professionals and as a society, and our values have grown to help us face a future that will no longer be the same. We have strengthened our visibility in the eyes of patients, professionals, and the society in general. All these years of hard work along with the development of the strategies outlined in the "Towards future with safety" plan have enabled hospital pharmacy services to successfully safe this public health crisis.

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