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Pharmacy  
Whakamahere

**Understanding the pharmacy needs of our population   
Summary of findings | 2023**

# Background and Purpose

During 2021 and 2022, the Pharmacy Team from Manatu Hauora - Ministry of Health and Te Whatu Ora – Health New Zealand consulted widely with consumer and whānau groups throughout Aotearoa.

The intent was to provide an opportunity for consumer groups to share their honest experiences of pharmacy with us along with suggestions for things that could be done better. We also hoped to form relationships with these groups as a foundation for future conversations.

Each hui/talanoa covered:

* An outline of current pharmacy services available.
* An opportunity for people to talk about their experiences, good and bad.
* Discussion on ways to make bad experiences better and any other ideas that would make using a pharmacy easier and safer.
* Discussion on what difference these changes would make for them, their whānau and community.

The end goal is a pharmacy sector that is aware of and able to better meet the needs of its consumers.

## Consumer Groups that Participated

**Māori consumers**

To honour the important role of Māori in Aotearoa and their importance in our health system, Te Amokura Consultants conducted the engagement with Māori consumers. This allowed these hui to be by Māori for Māori, whānau to whānau and include insight into the role of pharmacy in te ao Māori.

* Pasifika consumers.
* The Pacific People with Disabilities community.
* Deaf consumers.
* Blind and low vision communities.

# Themes

Seven themes came through as challenges for all communities.

In this report, we outline the main things raised for each theme, then look at specific challenges faced by each community. Everything included in this report reflects the consumer voice that we heard.

Please note: this is a condensed version of the full report. The full report is available on the Ministry of Health website.

## Access

* People need to feel safe getting into and navigating through pharmacies.
* Remove things that make it difficult for a person to get to the pharmacy.

## Communication

* Everyone needs to receive, understand and retain information about their medicine.
* Make detailed conversations private for privacy and dignity.
* Explain all changes to prescriptions. Any change can be worrying to someone with a disability or communication barrier.
* Help people to know if they are talking to the right person so they don’t have to repeat everything.
* Disability awareness. Have patience. Go slow and check that the person is understanding what you are saying. Talk to the person not their carer.

## Technology

* When changing to online services consider that not everyone has access to or is comfortable with technology.
* Use technical solutions to remove barriers. Including things such as:
* Alternate labelling as needed such as braille, visual with pictures, and the use of simple language.
* Offer bottles of different sizes and shapes for Blind people so they can tell their medicine apart easily.
* Have information sheets in simple language, and alternate languages including sign and braille; consider using pictograms.
* Email all information sheets in machine readable formats.
* Have access to NZ Relay sign language interpreting service either by having a dedicated device such as an iPad, or by having free WiFi so people can use their own devices.
* Note people’s needs on your pharmacy computer system.
* Communicate that a prescription or repeat is ready in a way that can be understood by that person.
* Allow Deaf people to text the pharmacy so they can communicate.
* Offer aids for taking medicines, such as measuring aids for Blind people (eg, eye dropper devices, measuring devices with the scale on the outside of the device).
* Offer Script Talk once it is available.
* Have equipment available in the pharmacy, such as scales and blood pressure machines.
* It will be great when all pharmacies and General Practices can share records.

## Atmosphere - Including Cultural Awareness and Safety, Privacy, Relationships and Staff Training

* Commitment to Te Tiriti and te reo Māori as an official language of Aotearoa.
* Commitment to NZ Sign as an official language of Aotearoa.
* Offer staff training in cultural and disability awareness and communication.
* Respect people’s right to privacy. Have a clinical room or private area for sensitive conversations or for the more detailed conversations needed with people who are Blind or Deaf.
* Wait times are getting longer. Consider the customer’s needs, particularly if disabled or elderly.
* Let people know what services you offer by displaying a list of them in multiple ways, accessible regardless of disability or first language.
* Cultivate relationships with regular customers. They will feel more welcome and safer, and you will be more aware of their needs.
* Offer holistic services if you have a clinic room.

## Funding

* Offer alternate payment methods including:
* Online payments especially for people who are reliant on a carer to collect their medicine.
* Automatic payments to spread the cost.
* Mention what the cost will be when the script is presented to avoid embarrassment and allow for solutions.
* Provide information about the Prescription Subsidy Card and make sure people understand what it is.

## The Challenges Brought About by COVID-19

* Please remove masks if asked so Deaf people can lip-read or use a clear face shield.
* Offer assistance to people unable to do their own RAT such as Blind people.
* Communicate that medicine can be delivered to people who are isolating.
* Don’t create access issues for people with disabilities such as putting tables in entrance ways.

## Medicine Safety

* More care needed when dispensing medicine, especially if a person has access or sight issues. Consider the following:
* Go through prescription items with the customer.
* Never hand the script over without checking it with the customer.
* Arrange to deliver any missing, short or owed medicine.
* Have good communication around stock issues.
* Communicate any changes to medicines, don’t assume understanding.

# Community Specific Learnings

At the end of every hui/talanoa we asked the questions:

* What would a good (pharmacy) experience look like?
* What would be needed to make this happen?
* What difference would this good experience make for you, your whānau and your community?

We finish this report by highlighting the responses that were shared with us.

## For Māori Consumers

For Māori, the solution is not a one size fits all. There needs to be a range of solutions that are able to be adapted so they can cater to the needs of Māori within their respective rohe, with pharmacies operating in collaboration with Māori health providers and marae. In this way we will be able to work together to better support the health needs of Māori, especially their whānau and kaumātua.

## For Pacific Consumers

Pacific people would like to see a future state that includes:

* More awareness of all the services that pharmacies and pharmacists offer.
* Clear notices/posters in pharmacies saying that we can ask questions anytime. It’s obvious that they sell stuff but it’s not obvious that I can ask for help.
* There will be a private consultation room or space available in all pharmacies.
* Pharmacies would be more inclusive and look and feel less ‘white’. The use of Pacific decorations could be one way to help achieve this.
* Language barriers removed by the use of Pacific languages, visual or more simplified language.
* Less fear around medicine and vaccinations. There is a lot of misinformation online which can confuse our people. It would be good if pharmacists could spend more time and do more to explain medicines to us.
* More support to help patients navigate the health system.
* Pharmacies and community providers have a good working relationship and can work together as a wraparound service.

## For Pacific People with Disabilities

Pacific families are extended families, often living together. We all look after each other even when we have a disability. Community pharmacies play such an important role in the health journeys of our families and our communities, so when there are barriers, we all struggle. If these barriers were removed, it would be easier to stay well and healthy. We would be more confident asking for advice, understand our medicines and be happier taking them.

## For Blind and Low Vision Consumers

We want to feel safe and confident when we take medicine. At the moment, this is often not the case. For us, an ideal experience would include:

* We would feel safer picking up our prescriptions because there would always be a clear route to the counter, wide enough for ourselves and a guide dog, and where possible the counter would be at the front of the pharmacy.
* To ensure our privacy, all pharmacies would have a clinical room or a more private space where we could talk with the pharmacist.
* Accessible labelling. All our medicines would be labelled in braille.
* Information leaflets would be available in braille.
* All pharmacies would have Script Talk.

## For Deaf Consumers

‘A lot of Deaf people suffer in terms of cost, financially things are difficult. There is a barrier to communication, to even be able to ask for help you need an interpreter. If the information was accessible and understandable and we were able to ask questions to clarify, the impact on deaf people’s lives would be better health, better recovery, because we have understanding and are taking the right medication and taking the right dosage and the risks if this doesn’t happen are huge – you may be taking the wrong medication or the wrong dose or you may have a reaction to it and you may end up in ED’.

‘Deaf people are parents too, it makes me anxious and uncertain when I have to look after my children, and I want to make sure they are receiving the right medication and that is a big risk and I do worry. It has an impact on your mental health and wellbeing.’

‘If these changes happened, I would feel confident, equal and more independent. I would be able to trust in terms of the medicine and what to expect from it. It would be fantastic, no more experiencing barriers every day.’

# Whakataukī

This whakataukī was spoken at each hui and talanoa. It was chosen because it spoke to our intent to bring people together from different communities to kōrero and ako. We hope this report will also generate discussion and learning, paving the way for positive change.

He pūkenga wai | Where the rivers meet

He nōhanga tangata | People come together

He nōhanga tangata | Where people come together

He pūkenga kōrero | There is debate and learning.

**End of information: Pharmacy Whakamahere: Understanding the pharmacy needs of our population   
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