



The role of the pharmacist during COVID-19

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To have a better understanding of the coronavirus, you have to know what the virus is. The Coronaviruses (CoVs) form part of the viruses that can cause illnesses ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV). A novel coronavirus (nCoV) is a new strain that has not been previously identified in humans. Currently, the whole world experiences the SARS-CoV-2 virus and measures have been implemented to prevent the spread of the virus and minimise the risk to the global population.

Delving a little deeper in the SARS-CoV-2 virus, it is believed to have various modes of transmission. Most often, the spread is person to person contact. For this reason, social distancing plays a key role in preventing transmission. It is recommended to keep a distance of at least 1.5 to 2 m. The transmission occurs via respiratory droplets that are produced when a person coughs or sneezes. The infection occurs when this droplet comes into contact with a person's nose, mouth or eyes. Another mode of transmission is when a person touches a surface that has been contaminated with the virus. There is evidence that coronaviruses can remain infectious on inanimate surfaces for several hours or even days. (Kampf G, 2020). Does it mean you are only contagious if you have symptoms? The answer is no! A person may be asymptomatic but may transmit the virus to other people (Ruiyun Li, 2020). The COVID-19 virus has an incubation period of 2 to 14 days until the onset of symptoms. A study done by Lauer SA suggests that once a person becomes infected, said person will start to display symptoms within 11 days. Symptoms to look out for will include fever, cough, shortness of breath and in some cases muscle aches and pains.

There are preventative measures to help eradicate the virus. Such measures include the use of PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) which include face masks, face shields and gloves. PPE helps protect both the health care worker and the client against the possible risk of contamination with the virus. Another method to use is proper handwashing and the use of alcohol-based hand sanitisers regularly. Also, surfaces and equipment must be cleaned regularly to ensure a safe and clean environment free from any possible virus.



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The pharmacist can play a crucial role in fighting the COVID-19 virus. Both pharmacists from the community sector as well as the hospital sector have some key responsibilities. Besides the availability of essential medicines, the pharmacist must continue to educate the client on proper infection and disease prevention, identifying signs and symptoms and referring patients for further consultation, as well as promoting social distancing and encouraging washing of hands. Hand sanitising units must be available so that when someone enters the pharmacy, they can sanitise their hands. Pharmacists should ensure that all their clients wear their masks correctly and also educate if need be when masks are worn incorrectly. The use of posters and information pamphlets can add value and will help educate our clients.

Pharmacists can play a key role in helping to prevent the further spread of the virus.