



COP26 and green pharmacy – ICPA position paper



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Paris was all about commitments, Glasgow has got to be about action!

In adopting the FIP Development Goal 21 (Sustainability in Pharmacy) ICPA has been driven to action in the three key identified areas. The first is our response to **disasters and pandemics** through both the COVID-19 action programme, including our COVID-19 testing of healthcare workers in 2020 and, in 2021, through the extensive COVID-19 vaccination programme provided through community pharmacy. **Sustainable services** introduced as part of our three-year planning cycle includes discussion with payers and Government on a fair and transparent remuneration model, development of pharmacy initiated services in both communicable and non-communicable diseases such as Pharmacist Initiated Management of Anti-retroviral Therapy (PIMART), Kamba Ya Shanga (asthma) programme, Diabetes Registry Project, Outcomes Measures and Reporting (OMR), Donor Recruitment Centre (DKMS Africa) for the fight against blood cancer and our AMR education.

The third in Goal 21 and current topic of worldwide interest (COP26) is **environment and planetary health** (Climate Change). Over the years, we have dabbled in mini projects such as medicine disposal, empty inhaler return, needle disposal and a move away from plastic bag usage. Pharmacy and medicines have a huge environmental impact starting from the manufacturing plant, storage and disposal, distribution chain all the way into the hands of the patients. Further to that, we have a responsibility to influence Government Policy, contribute to enacting laws, creating a green working environment, influencing our partners, and educating the communities we work in. Studies have indicated a significant concentration of pharmaceuticals in sewerage, wastewater treatment, and surface water.¹ Most of these are released from production facilities, excretion from humans and animals using medicines and inappropriate disposal of medicine waste including unused medicines.²

Daughton³ proposed the need for green pharmacy policy that appropriately assessed, anticipated, and managed pharmaceuticals, a cradle to grave concept. It is the intention of ICPA to create a series of partnerships to ensure we have a sustainable

approach to pharmaceuticals as we too become early adopters of the FIP Green Pharmacy Policy.⁴ There are a number of notable green projects in the South African healthcare industry, participants include manufacturers, distributors, green hospitals and schools of pharmacy. Performing a risk assessment of activities and issues associated in the pharmaceutical process, measuring its impact on the environment, and providing solutions to mitigate the environmental risk is the direction the ICPA Board intends taking. Designing key indicators and providing annual assessments of progress will become a measure of our success.

It has been recognised that climate change has a direct and indirect influence on the health of our patients/communities through extreme weather patterns having an impact on food security, flooding, drought, infectious disease patterns, and respiratory diseases via air pollution (Kirsty Reid – European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industry and Assoc [EFPIA]). The COP26 agenda in Glasgow is a firm drive to encourage a **net-zero carbon footprint** operation. The global pandemic has also created an opportunity for our industry to rethink the business-as-usual concept. There is also a business case being made that climate change principals are based on being less wasteful with energy consumption, production waste, transportation, water consumption – all of which leads to better financial performance. The NHS in the UK⁵ has set out an ambitious plan to become the world's first net-zero National Health Service identifying that medicines accounts for 25% of total emissions from the health service. Based on this assumption, pharmacy in South Africa has a huge role to play in assisting Government achieve its targets.

The IPCC Sixth Assessment Report Summary⁶ (to which South Africa has drafting authors François Engelbrecht and MS Monteiro and contributing author Rondrotiana Barimalala) indicates that we need to halve greenhouse gas emissions between 2020 and 2030, reverse nature loss in order to reach net zero and limit global warming to 1.5 °C. Time is running out, and every fraction of a degree threatens to cause more death and economic destruction. Minister Barbara Creecy (Forestry, Fisheries and Environment-

SA) said, "The Glasgow outcome should be a package deal that advances the negotiations and all three aspects of the Paris Agreement, namely **mitigation**, **adaptation** and the means of **implementation** of climate action. South Africa stands ready to play a constructive role for the success of COP26." Pharmacy needs to focus on the practical solutions of mitigation, adaptation and implementation. A good example is the implementation of a better ordering system in 3 800 pharmacies across the country, removing the need for "just-in-time deliveries" and eliminating the need for 3–5-times a day delivery. Imagine the impact of this number of reduced deliveries and its contribution to the **net-zero carbon emission**. There are many examples of this type of initiative that will satisfy the goals of COP26 and make business sense in medicine supply. ICPA will map out the process.

"This is not a drill. It's code red for the Earth. Millions will suffer as our planet is devastated — a terrifying future that will be created, or avoided, by the decisions you make. You have the power to decide."

Greta Thunberg

(Swedish environmental activist)

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