As pharmacies are flooded with patients in need, pharmacists and staff put themselves at risk for patients

Lansing, Mich. – As cases of COVID-19 continue to escalate in Michigan, pharmacists and pharmacy technicians are on the front lines of the pandemic. Pharmacists are typically recognized as the most accessible health experts in the community with their daily interaction with the public. With this comes a danger to pharmacy professionals during this time as patients flood pharmacies for necessities and treatment of various health complaints and symptoms.

Community pharmacies are experiencing traffic that has not been seen in years. Interactions between pharmacy staff and the public have been in high demand since the virus reached Michigan. Individuals are seeking advantages to fight the virus, from stocking up on essential over-the-counter medicine, to daily items that can be found in the pharmacy. Pharmacists are not just dispensing prescriptions, but also providing assistance on over-the-counter medications. With Governor Whitmer’s recent executive orders EO 2020-25 - Temporary enhancements to operational capacity, flexibility, and efficiency of pharmacies and EO 2020-30 - Temporary relief of certain restrictions and requirements governing the provision of medical services - pharmacists have been able to provide the necessary one-on-one direct patient care to assist the public.

Every day, pharmacists and pharmacy technicians work tirelessly to assure that patients are able to remain in their homes and out of the hospital. To protect pharmacy staff from virus exposure while they continue to help patients, the Michigan Pharmacists Association (MPA) strongly encourages community pharmacies to follow best practices such as the utilization of the drive-through, curbside pick-up and delivery services if available. Since personal protection equipment (PPE) is scarce and being allocated to healthcare professionals treating known COVID-19 patients, MPA recommends patients that are experiencing COVID-19-like symptoms send someone else to the pharmacy when possible. This will help prevent spread of the disease as well as protect pharmacy staff to ensure community pharmacies can remain open. When sending someone else is not possible, patients are encouraged to contact their pharmacy in advance of pick-up to determine if their prescriptions are readily available. When in the pharmacy, patients should practice appropriate distancing when approaching pharmacy staff or other individuals.

As preparations begin for the field hospital being created at TCF center in Detroit, pharmacists are being sought out to assist with patient screenings as well as dispensing medications. Health-system pharmacists are also being stretched to the limit during these times as pharmacists and technicians interact with health teams to treat patients and others as they fight COVID-19.

Pharmacists are the medication experts and are available to assist patients with health needs. The pharmacists and pharmacy technicians are working every day to keep their patients supplied with the necessary medications to keep Michigan residents healthy and out of the hospital.

Michigan Pharmacists Association, representing the nearly 9,000 pharmacists and 15,000 pharmacy technicians in Michigan, strives to serve members by providing support, advocacy and resources that ultimately improve patient care, safety, health and the practice of pharmacy. For more information, visit www.MichiganPharmacists.org.

###