



## **EAHP sets out to future-proof the hospital pharmacy workforce**

**23 February 2023**

Healthcare workforce shortages are not a new phenomenon triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. They were simply exacerbated by it. Shortages of nurses or physicians in hospitals, particularly in rural areas are frequently featured in news outlets across Europe. However, not only these professions are affected but also the pharmacy workforce, including pharmacists, technicians and others. Especially those working in hospitals have to cope with staffing which is insufficient to meet patients' needs.

To address the problem of pharmacy workforce shortages, the European Association of Hospital Pharmacists (EAHP) and its members started an in-depth analysis of the situation in Europe. A workshop conducted with delegates from EAHP's member countries in June last year was followed by an Investigation of the Hospital Pharmacy Profession in Europe that closed in the first quarter of 2023. Touching on the state-of-the-art of the profession and specifically on the European Statements of Hospital Pharmacy <sup>[1]</sup>, the investigation collected

information on their implementation, the size of the profession and other pharmacy-specific practice areas.

Scientific achievements for example in the field of advanced therapy medicinal products are leading to increasingly complex medication-related problems, specific handling and preparations and related issues. In addition, new competencies and tasks widened the scope of engagement of hospital pharmacists in multi-professional teams in the hospital setting and beyond. Medicines reconciliation, medication optimisation, bedside counselling or being part of the antimicrobial stewardship team are just a few of the clinical pharmacy services that should be provided to all patients across Europe by hospital pharmacists as part of the multidisciplinary care team. To ensure the availability of these vital services a resilient workforce is required.

Other aspects requiring a future-proof pharmacy workforce are the increasing individualisation of care, growing medicine shortage problems requiring interventions by hospital pharmacists and supporting personnel, and rising healthcare costs. The latter can be addressed with the help of pharmacy expertise linked to the procurement of medicines and medical devices and health technology assessments (HTAs) but is also associated with a larger need for the workforce to handle often very specific needs of the patients. Another very important chapter for optimal patient outcomes and safety is the interface of care. Thus, the need for highly educated and specialised professionals in medication and medication-related processes that can ensure the seamless transfer of patients between healthcare settings is growing.

High-quality education in all European countries is of utmost importance for addressing the workforce problems of pharmacists to ensure that the profession remains an integral part of healthcare. Education needs to go hand in hand with hiring enough pharmacy personnel, including support staff, and finding the appropriate balance of training a sufficient number of students each year to robustly grow the pharmacy profession in each country.

For EAHP it is clearly time to act for patients in all countries around Europe. Concrete action that ensures a resilient and future-proof pharmacy profession by for example training an adequate number of students to fill the growing number of vacancies in clinical, community, hospital and industrial pharmacies is urgently needed. To address the workforce gaps, EAHP plans to put forward a new position paper on the hospital pharmacy workforce that proposes short and long-term measures.

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The European Association of Hospital Pharmacists (EAHP) is a not-for-profit organisation that defends the interests of more than 25.000 European hospital pharmacists from its 36 full and associate member organisations. EAHP works to develop knowledge on hospital pharmacy to ease the improvement of care and outcomes for patients in the hospital setting. The Association achieves this through science, practice, research, education, as well as sharing

best-practice and responsibility with other healthcare professionals. More information about EAHP is available [HERE](#) [3].

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