

“Accessibility of Adult Immunizations in Pharmacies Compared to Physician Offices in Low-Income Communities” Shows Pharmacists Can Increase Vaccine Access

In May 2022, the *Journal of the American Pharmacists Association* published a study showing that pharmacists can increase vaccine access for people who live in low-income communities, particularly seniors, and reduce health disparities.

[“Accessibility of Adult Immunizations in Pharmacies Compared to Physician Offices in Low-Income Communities”](#) finds that in communities where more than 30% of households live in poverty, the number of pharmacies is 15% higher than the number of doctors’ offices. In addition to having more locations in these areas, the study found that pharmacies offer more hours for vaccinations than doctors’ offices, which can be critical for people without paid leave benefits or access to child care who need to make appointments during nontraditional hours or on weekends. This study was conducted by the [Global Healthy Living Foundation](#) and funded by the [American Disease Prevention Coalition](#).

The study underscores the Coalition’s relentless efforts to ensure every pharmacist, pharmacy intern, and pharmacy technician in every state is permitted to administer all vaccines. We must ensure equitable access to vaccinations, particularly as people of color, the elderly, and those who live in low-income communities continue to be disproportionately affected by severe disease and deaths from COVID-19.

Pandemics have illustrated the effectiveness of expanding access to vaccines in pharmacies. [CDC data](#) show more than 40 million people have received a flu vaccine at a pharmacy so far during the 2021-22 flu season, compared with nearly 31 million getting the flu shot at a physician's office. As of December 2021, pharmacies were providing more than two-thirds of COVID-19 vaccines.

Under the national Public Health Emergency, pharmacists, pharmacy interns, and pharmacy technicians in every state are permitted to administer vaccinations to people ages 3 and up. When that declaration is lifted, however, state laws that restrict the ability of pharmacists to administer certain vaccines to certain populations will once again be in effect — we cannot let this happen.

Lack of access is a key reason why vaccination rates for several preventable diseases are not nearly as high as they could or should be, and when our underserved communities are disproportionately being impacted, we must respond accordingly and do everything we can to make sure pharmacists’ rights remain intact.

The ability of pharmacists, pharmacy interns, and pharmacy technicians to administer recommended vaccinations in every state should not end when the pandemic ends. Ensuring pharmacists, pharmacy interns, and pharmacy technicians in all 50 states can administer all FDA-approved or authorized or CDC ACIP recommended vaccines would help lay the groundwork for an equitable healthcare system for all.

Read the press release [here](#).

Read quotes from ADPC Coalition members who share their perspectives about the importance of this study.

"This study is further confirmation of what we already know. In many minority and underserved communities, whether urban or rural, the neighborhood community pharmacy is often the only health care provider for miles. Pharmacies have demonstrated the critical public health role they play in supporting our nation's efforts to achieve its health equity goals and save lives.

All policymakers should lend their support to the newly introduced bipartisan legislation, [H.R. 7213, "The Equitable Community Access to Pharmacy Services Act,"](#) from Representatives Ron Kind (D-WI), David B. McKinley (R-WV), Nanette Diaz Barragán (D-CA), and Buddy Carter (R-GA) to ensure that patients don't lose access to the necessary vaccinations, treatments and therapeutics in our battle to defeat COVID-19 and future public health emergencies, including closing the gaps in health equity."

- *Scott Knoer, MS, PharmD, FASHP, Executive Vice President and CEO, American Pharmacists Association (APhA)*

"ADPC's study affirms a core belief at Good Neighbor Pharmacy — community pharmacies are an essential part of our healthcare system, especially in underserved areas across the country. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed just how critical these sites of care are to addressing public health emergencies. In fact, more than half of pharmacies within AmerisourceBergen and Good Neighbor Pharmacy's Federal Retail Pharmacy Program for COVID-19 vaccination were in socially vulnerable communities, as outlined by the CDC's Social Vulnerability Index. And, nearly 50% of the patients that received a vaccine through Good Neighbor Pharmacy's program were located in a socially vulnerable community. This is just one example of the tremendously important reach that independent pharmacies have into underserved communities. This reach, coupled with the high-touch care that independent pharmacies provide their patients, is a huge opportunity for our healthcare system at large. It's time that we recognize the critical role that pharmacists play in protecting the health and well-being of patients and consumers across the nation."

- *Jenni Zilka, Senior Vice President, Community & Specialty Pharmacy & President, Good Neighbor Pharmacy, AmerisourceBergen*

"The accessibility, trust and capabilities of pharmacies were shown to have a powerful effect on health equity prior to the pandemic, and then the vaccination effort against COVID-19 put the value of pharmacy on display for the nation's decision-makers to see. The role of pharmacies as the face of neighborhood healthcare should be leveraged even more moving forward to enhance health equity and to address social determinants of health. This research further reinforces that truth."

- *Steven C. Anderson, President and CEO, National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS)*