

CORONAVIRUS

2020 COVID-19 REPORT



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NCPA 2020 COVID-19 REPORT

2020: THE YEAR OF ALL COVID-19, ALL THE TIME

If you believe in the power of positive thinking, you know the phrase “look for the silver lining.” It comes from the idea that every dark cloud has a silver lining. You just have to look for the good. Sometimes it almost takes a high-powered microscope to see it. But in the pandemic of 2020-21, there is some good news for community pharmacy.

We're now more than a year into the pandemic. It's been surprising and challenging, to say the least. If you had “constantly mutating novel virus” on your 2020 bingo card, you deserve a prize. As tough as all this has been, community pharmacy has won a prize, in a way. We've shined brightly through the chaos and confusion. We've kept our doors open, we've found transformative ways to serve our patients and keep our businesses rolling, and we've proven our worth as health care assets in our communities.

We're essential. We've always known it. It's rewarding to see others realize it.

In this report, we're taking a look at the ways COVID-19 permeated every part of our lives in 2020. It certainly felt like all COVID, all the time. There seemed to be something just about every day, from federal and state legislation and policies to fast-moving information to pharmacists responding in the moment.

The thread that ran through it all was NCPA. The association staff worked tirelessly to advocate for and support independent pharmacy as policies evolved. NCPA members matched that effort with constant innovation and dedication. Members helped their patients and communities and shared those efforts with other members. The stories were inspiring and educational. You'll read a few of them in this report.

Of course, there's still work to do. The Biden administration has set the bar high; the president wants 150 million people immunized in his first 100 days in office. Many independent pharmacies are involved in the vaccination effort, and we hope that increases – and that we get the vaccine to make it happen. NCPA continues to advocate daily for more community pharmacy involvement. You can help: Reach out to local and state health officials. Let them know you're ready to vaccinate. Work with your patients, too. Just as you've answered questions about the virus itself for the past year, now you need to share what you know about the vaccines. Many of your patients are relying on bad or questionable information from social media and “friends.” It's our job to debunk a lot of that. Be straight with your patients. Tell them how important this is.

Let's defeat this virus once and for all. Be an advocate. Share what you know. I hope that our great-grandchildren will look back at this time and see that we came together to wipe out this threat. That despite all that divides us, we worked together to do something important for humanity in this moment.

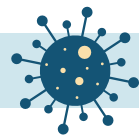
Best,



Brian Caswell, RPh
President



NCPA President Brian Caswell and his wife Gretchen and NCPA Board of Directors Chairman Hugh Chancy and wife Tina represented NCPA at a reception for health care providers at the White House in December.



FEDERAL COVID-19 CONGRESSIONAL ACTION

Paycheck Protection Program expanded in COVID-19 relief bill:

NCPA swung into action at the very start of the pandemic. Our priorities were to ensure that community pharmacists were recognized among the essential small businesses eligible for relief, and that they had the resources and authority to protect their patients from the disease.

Congress passed an end-of-year COVID-19 relief bill in December that President Trump signed into law. NCPA was instrumental in getting new funding and improvements to the Paycheck Protection Program, including expansion and simplification of PPP loan forgiveness, deductibility of expenses, extension and expansion of employee retention tax credit, and a second PPP loan opportunity for those that qualify. In addition to lobbying for these improvements, NCPA also joined as signatories on multiple coalition letters to Congress pertaining to the PPP.

NCPA also advocated for passage of:

- **Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act:** Created the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) which allows pharmacies with fewer than 500 employees who maintain their payroll to receive 100 percent federally guaranteed cash-flow assistance loans. Restored the ability of small business pharmacies to carry back any net operating losses against previous year tax payments. Allowed patients to use HSA or FSA for OTC medications and menstrual products. NCPA created signage for in-pharmacy use to alert patients to this change.

- **Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act:** Successfully advocated for an additional \$310 billion for the PPP, \$50 billion for the Disaster Loans Program Account, \$75 billion for reimbursements to health care providers to support COVID-19-related expenses and lost revenue, and \$25 billion for necessary expenses related to COVID-19 tests.
- **Paycheck Protection Program Flexibility Act:** Secured improvements to the PPP by advocating for extending the term for the forgiveness of PPP loans (24 weeks or until the end of the calendar year), allowing for five years to repay any money owed, extension of the rehiring deadline for loan forgiveness from 8 to 24 weeks, and reducing the 75/25 rule to 60/40 so that at least 60 percent of PPP loan funds must be used for payroll.



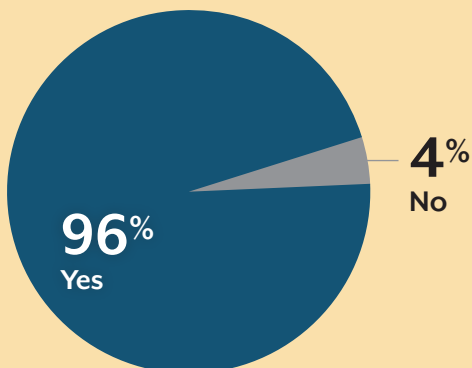
NCPA Officer Michael Kim participated in a listening session hosted by Vice President Pence where he shared stories of the damage caused to his pharmacies and addressed independent pharmacy concerns with PBMs.

NCPA Survey June 2020

1. Did your pharmacy apply for federal aid under the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP)?

Value	Percent	Responses
Yes	95.8%	204
No	4.2%	9

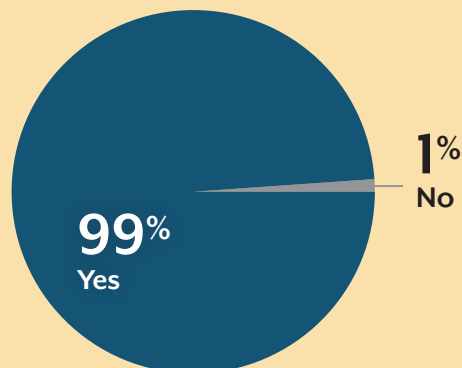
Totals: 213



2. Have you received the funding?

Value	Percent	Responses
Yes	99.0%	202
No	1.0%	2

Totals: 204



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- **Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA):** Expanded paid sick leave and Family and Medical Leave Act requirements effective April 1, 2020 and expired Dec. 31, 2020. All pharmacy employees were designated as health care providers and exempt from FFCRA requirements.

NCPA supported business liability protections: NCPA signed onto a letter to members of Congress urging swift enactment of temporary and targeted liability relief legislation related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The letter, which was signed by more than 200 organizations, urges protections to safeguard businesses, non-profit organizations, and educational institutions, as well as health care providers and facilities from unfair lawsuits.

Rep. Buddy Carter and Douglas Hoey op-ed stresses importance of pharmacists during pandemic: Earlier this year, *The Hill* published an op-ed by Rep. Buddy Carter (R-Ga.) and NCPA CEO Douglas Hoey titled "Pharmacists Play a Critical Role in Defeating COVID-19." In the piece, Carter and Hoey stress the importance of allowing pharmacists to practice at the top of their license in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic.



Promoting pharmacist provider status: In March, Rep. Buddy Carter (R-Ga.) along with 35 House colleagues sent a bipartisan letter proposing language to provide authority for pharmacist provider status under Medicare Part B to address COVID-19. These efforts resulted in HHS providing regulatory flexibilities that many pharmacists across the nation have taken advantage of to provide tests and be reimbursed by Medicare.

STATE COVID-19 ACTION

NCPA made policy recommendations to influential state organizations: NCPA advocated to influential organizations that represent state policymakers (the National Governors Association, the National Council of Insurance Legislators, and the National Association of Insurance Commissioners) calling on them to address obstacles imposed by health plans and PBMs that are threatening patient access to pharmacy services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Model regulatory language for states: NCPA created model language addressing pharmacy audits, pharmacy access and reimbursements for use in Executive Orders or other state regulatory orders to address these issues.

- **States have issued emergency orders governing PBM practices:** The orders include such directives as requiring PBMs to waive signature requirements, suspend pharmacy audits, cease mandatory mail-order requirements, and make it easier for patients to obtain 90-day fills and early refills. States issuing orders include Alaska, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas, Vermont, and West Virginia.

NCPA advocated for pharmacist authority to administer COVID-19 testing: Forty-three state governments, including Washington, D.C., aligned with HHS guidance to remove unnecessary restrictions via executive orders, waivers, or rules allowing pharmacists to order and administer COVID-19 tests.

Medicaid payments for home delivery: Massachusetts, Missouri, Utah, and North Carolina increased the dispensing fee under Medicaid for home delivery of prescriptions.

Civil immunity in states: States that granted pharmacists civil immunity from COVID-19 related lawsuits include Alaska, Arizona, Connecticut, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York.

NCPA engaged with National Governors Association to promote the importance of involving community pharmacists in combating COVID-19: NGA disseminated NCPA's recommendations to all governors in their respective states.

NCPA engaged NGA and the National Association of Medicaid Directors on COVID-19 vaccine administration fee and billing pathway options. NCPA advocated for an equitable and sustainable reimbursement for COVID-19 vaccine administration.



REGULATORY COVID-19 ACTION

HHS clarified pharmacists' authority to administer COVID-19 testing regardless of state law in response to NCPA advocacy efforts.

Pharmacists authorized to order and administer COVID-19 vaccinations in response to sustained NCPA advocacy efforts:

The guidance authorizes state-licensed pharmacists to order and administer COVID-19 vaccinations to persons ages 3 and older, regardless of state laws. Pharmacy interns acting under supervision of qualified pharmacists can administer the vaccinations as well.

HHS authorized all pharmacists to administer childhood vaccines: HHS authorized all state-licensed pharmacists and pharmacy interns to order and administer vaccines for patients aged 3 through 18 years during the COVID-19 public health emergency, regardless of state restrictions.

HHS extended PREP Act authorization to pharmacy technicians and interns: HHS announced guidance under the Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness (PREP) Act authorizing qualified pharmacy technicians and state-authorized pharmacy interns acting under the supervision of a qualified pharmacist to administer childhood vaccines to patients aged 3 through 18 years, COVID-19 tests, and COVID-19 vaccines when made available.

HHS guidance relaxed certain requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic: The guidance included relaxed enforcement of signature logs, suspension of pharmacy audits, permission of 90-day fills, and relaxation of LTC short cycle requirements.

CMS allowed pharmacists to authorize emergency refills when prescribers are not available to provide refill renewal prescriptions, when consistent with state emergency declarations.

With the prospect of COVID-19 vaccines, NCPA worked with entities like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Association of Immunization Managers (representing the people at state health departments focused on immunizations) to be sure they had independent pharmacies on their radar screen. One objective was to make it as easy as possible for both the CDC and state health departments to engage independent pharmacies. NCPA worked with PSAOs, GPOs and CPESN® USA to discuss the coming COVID-19 vaccine opportunities and to connect them to the CDC and the states. The inclusion of these entities representing independent community pharmacies in the CDC's Federal Retail Pharmacy Program is a direct result of these efforts.

The NCPA Innovation Center has worked with CPESN to ensure a smooth rollout of vaccines through the Federal Retail Pharmacy Program. CPESN USA began utilizing NCPA's learning management system, which was custom-tailored to keep track of the necessary requirements individual pharmacies needed to meet in order to participate in this national vaccine program. Together, CPESN USA and NCPA have created helpful resources to support pharmacies in their vaccinating roles.

NCPA staff quickly became experts on pharmacy-based testing and vaccination for COVID-19. Pictured with NCPA CEO Douglas Hoey are pharmacists from the NCPA testing and vaccine squad, Hannah Fish and Lisa Schwartz; other members not pictured are pharmacists Kurt Proctor, Ronna Hauser, and John Beckner.



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COVID-19 INFORMATION FOR PRACTITIONERS

At the outset of the pandemic, NCPA launched its Coronavirus Information Center, a dedicated section of ncpa.org managed and updated by the **NCPA Innovation Center**.

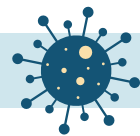
It is a comprehensive resource for community pharmacists on testing, vaccines, industry trends, professional practices, and state and federal programs. Since March of 2020, the Coronavirus Information Center has attracted **49,822 page views**, averaging nearly 5,000 visitors per month.



ACCESS TO VACCINES AND BEST PRACTICES

Under the Federal Pharmacy Retail Program for COVID-19 Vaccination, community pharmacists will be receiving the vaccines through CPESN. CPESN is the country's only clinically integrated network of community pharmacies that coordinates patient care with broader teams to provide medication optimization activities and enhanced services for high-risk patients. In 2020, NCPA and CPESN launched the COVID Best Practices site providing how-to information on infrastructure building, clinical resources, testing and vaccine implementation, and billing.





LIVE AND RECORDED WEBINARS

NCPA and its partners have offered 19 live and recorded webinars during the pandemic. The series covers a broad range of topics aimed at helping community pharmacists navigate many coronavirus-related challenges. They include:

- The federal COVID-19 relief bill and the Paycheck Protection Program
- Managing personnel in the time of COVID-19
- Medicare Part B supplier enrollment
- Administering the COVID-19 vaccines
- Creating confidence in the COVID-19 vaccines
- Immunizing long-term care patients

In the webinar featured below, CPA Scotty Sykes of Sykes & Company walks members through the process and requirements for the federal Payroll Protection Program. Under the PPP, thousands of NCPA members applied for and received forgivable loans to help small businesses through the economic turmoil caused by the pandemic.

ncpa.co/media/video/2020/sykes.mp4

High Level Overview

- PPP updates and improvements
- PPP forgiveness updates
- PPP 2.0
- SBA modifications and expansion
- Expansion of tax credits
- Unemployment programs expansion
- Stimulus checks to individuals
- HHS Provider Relief

SYKES & COMPANY, P.A.

In the video below, the NCPA Innovation Center's Hannah Fish and Michael E. Klepser, PharmD, a professor at Ferris State University College of Pharmacy, provide clinical instruction on the different types of COVID-19 point-of-care testing opportunities (molecular, antigen, and antibody).

ncpa.co/media/webinar/Part-2-Testing.mp4

Immunity to SARS-CoV-2

- IgM antibodies develop first in an infection and indicate presence of an acute or recent infection.
- IgG antibodies develop later during an infection and may circulate long after a pathogen has been eradicated from the body.
- We do not fully understand the immune response to SARS-CoV-2.
 - Durability of immunity
 - Protective antibody titer

SIDP NCPA

Thousands of pharmacists have attended the webinars. The videos, which are all housed in a video library on ncpa.org, have been viewed and downloaded more than 6,200 times.

NCPA MEMBERS TELLING THEIR STORY

Since before the national emergency was declared, community pharmacists have been on the front lines, helping patients and their communities. NCPA members have been featured in news reports doing extraordinary things, from compounding hand sanitizer to conducting testing to administering the vaccine.

In the clip below from *CBS Morning News*, Magnolia, Texas pharmacist Steven Hoffart explains how his pharmacy, and thousands like it across the United States, can bring the vaccine to people in hard-to-reach areas.



Dr. Shantelle L. Brown (below), owner of Hope Pharmacy in Richmond, Va., began making hand sanitizer shortly after the governor declared a state of emergency. Early in the pandemic, hand sanitizer and other personal protective supplies were suddenly in short supply. Brown told the *Richmond Free Press* that she gave away her product for free to first responders, and that she made sure her patients had enough to protect themselves and their families.

Hoffart and Brown are among dozens of community pharmacists whose stories NCPA has shared with news outlets across the country, as well as with NCPA members seeking advice from their peers on how to help their patients and communities get through the pandemic.

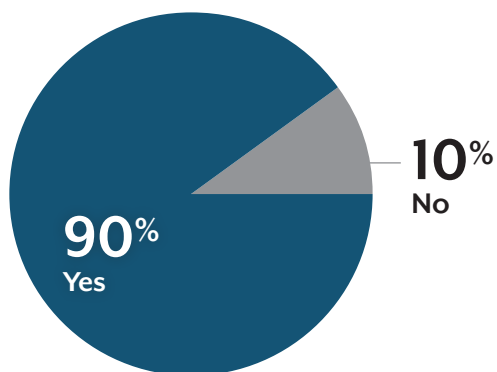


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RESEARCH

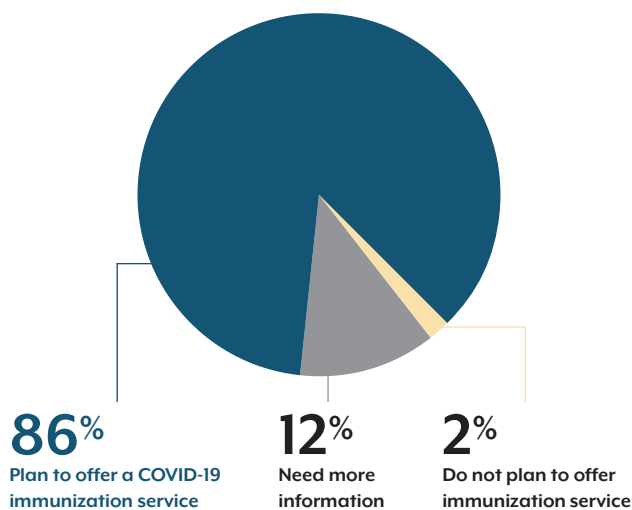
Throughout 2020, NCPA conducted a series of national surveys to determine how community pharmacists and their patients are dealing with COVID-19. In March, before most Americans knew the scope of the crisis, NCPA reported that 90 percent of community pharmacists were having difficulty getting hydroxychloroquine, a common drug in short supply because of an emerging political controversy.

1. Are you experiencing a shortage of hydroxychloroquine and/or chloroquine?

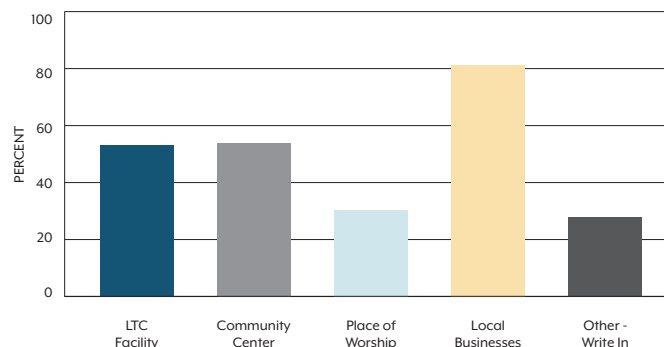


In August, as federal and state policymakers grappled with how to distribute vaccine to hundreds of millions of Americans, NCPA reported that community pharmacists were ready, willing, and able to assist. NCPA research showed that most community pharmacists were already immunizing patients against other diseases; that they were nimble enough to immunize patients wherever needed; and that an overwhelming majority planned to administer the COVID-19 vaccines when they became available.

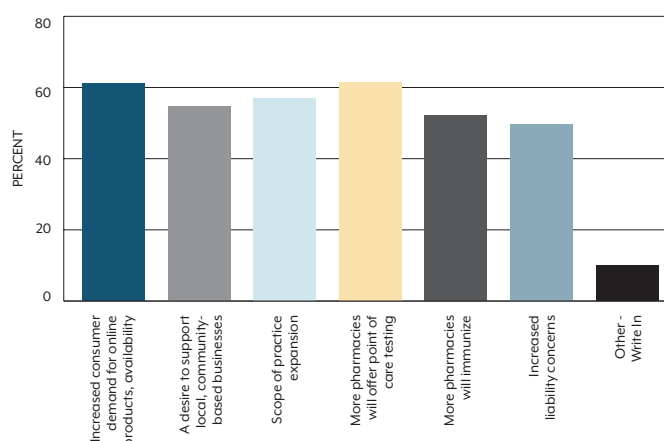
2. If a COVID-19 vaccine becomes available on the marketplace:



3. Please check all the facilities your pharmacy provides immunizations at:



4. How do you see the community pharmacy market shifting because of the pandemic? (Check all that apply)



5. What operational changes have you made during the pandemic that you expect to stick? (Check all that apply)

