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**VIRTUAL 2020**  
SEPTEMBER

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# THE IMPACT OF AIR POLLUTION ON RESPIRATORY HEALTH AND VULNERABILITY TO COVID-19. WHAT CAN COMMUNITY PHARMACISTS DO TO HELP?

An on-line panel session organized by The Clean Breathing Institute & International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP)  
14th September 2020, **13.00-14.30 CEST**  
FIP Virtual 2020  
Meeting report

On 14 September, amidst growing links between air quality and Covid-19, the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) and The Clean Breathing Institute, GSK's scientific collaborative initiative, brought a panel of global experts together to explore the support pharmacists need to advise patients on air pollution.

The event followed a letter sent from 40 million health professionals to the G20 leadership in May 2020, and the World Health Organisation's Covid-19 recovery manifesto, both of which highlighted the impact of air pollution on respiratory and overall health, and called for urgent action to ensure clean air for all.

Following an introduction by the chair, FIP Community Pharmacy Section President, Lars-Åke Söderlund, the event opened with presentations from each of the distinguished panel of global experts.

Glenis Kathleen Scadding, Consultant Physician at the Royal National ENT Hospital and Senior Lecturer in Clinical Immunology, at University College London explored the many and varied ways in which air pollution can impact respiratory health and the immune system. From pollution's interaction with gut microbiomes, and possible connection to obesity, to its impact on allergic sensitivity, Professor Scadding was keen to stress that air pollution is significantly damaging to health.

Explaining that early research has indicated that chronic exposure to air pollutants can delay Covid-19 recovery and lead to more severe and lethal forms of the disease, Dr Scadding called for further urgent investigation.

Gonçalo Sousa Pinto, FIP's Lead for Practice Development and Transformation, followed with a presentation of key findings from FIP's recent pharmacy focused survey on Air Pollution and Respiratory Health. Setting out the finding that pharmacists want to evolve their role as trusted advisors and provide proactive care in the area of air pollution and respiratory health, Mr Sousa Pinto also described the barriers to this work which include lack of educational and training materials as well as guidelines and practice-support tools.

## DISCOVERY

Rounding off the presentations, Dr Sundeep Santosh Salvi from Pulmocare Research and Education Foundation Research Foundation in India explored the respiratory health tools already available to pharmacy. From neti pots and nose filters to pharmacological solutions such as nasal sprays and gels, Dr Salvi set out a variety of management approaches, along with apps which can help pharmacists access real-time local air pollution data and adjust counselling accordingly.

Following the presentations, Mr Söderlund probed panellists further with a series of questions, leading to lively discussion.

Professor Scadding described the simple things that can be done in the home to prevent indoor air pollution, including Hoovering regularly and reducing exposure to chemicals which increase the chance of asthma development in children. Mr Sousa Pinto highlighted the steps that can be taken to prevent impact, and manage symptoms of air pollution, where these steps are not evident.

Panellists also discussed the importance of masks, not only as effective barriers to general air pollution but also as essential tools in the fight against Covid-19. The experts agreed that pharmacists must keep themselves abreast of the evidence so that they can provide up to date and accurate advice to patients. Both Mr Sousa Pinto and Dr Salvi stressed the importance of ensuring that the masks patients purchase are genuine and effective.

A common theme of the discussion was the unique value that pharmacists can offer to patients in the management of air pollution and respiratory health, as they know their communities and the likely local pollutants at play.

Concluding, Mr Söderlund reminded attendees that, as air pollution kills 7 million people each year and impacts people's vulnerability to infectious diseases, action must be taken now.

Community pharmacists are, he stressed, vital, both to raising awareness and the provision of practical advice. In their emerging role as the most accessible healthcare provider in the prevention and management of non-communicable disease, pharmacists are extremely important, not just in the battle against air pollution but also in the sustainability and accessibility of health care systems worldwide.

FIP and The Clean Breathing Institute would like to thank all participants for their contributions. We are committed to truly changing people's lives.

Watch the recording of the session on [www.thecleanbreathinginstitute.com](http://www.thecleanbreathinginstitute.com)  
For more information on this session, [click here](#).


EXPERT INSIGHTS.



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This event is a sponsored partnership between FIP and The Clean Breathing Institute, a scientific collaborative initiative of  Consumer Healthcare.

