



Photo by [Polina Tankilevitch](#) on Pexels

Let pharmacists provide more medical services

Expanded COVID emergency authorities have worked well and should be made permanent

April 11, 2023 |

By [Josh Archambault](#)

Getting in with your doctor isn't always easy. Physician shortages are straining our medical system, forcing patients to delay even commonplace care such as vaccinations and diagnostic testing. But do you know who is almost always available to help with these simple procedures? Your local pharmacist.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, pharmacists and pharmacy technicians began administering vaccines and conducting diagnostic testing to help increase patient access to care. This new authority was granted by the federal government and ultimately enabled more individuals to receive the flu, shingles, meningitis and COVID-19 vaccine without a prescriber order. Sick patients were able to avoid crowded waiting rooms while waiting for a diagnosis.

Since these new authorities were granted, heading to your local pharmacy for a routine vaccination or to get a COVID-19 test has become an expected option for Michigan patients. But without legislative action by the state, these options are set to expire.

[House Bill 4316](#) and [Senate Bill 219](#) have been introduced in the Michigan Legislature to allow greater use of pharmacists within the health care system.

Specifically, these bills would permanently allow pharmacists to prescribe and administer vaccines without the supervision of a doctor. Trained pharmacy technicians would be authorized to administer vaccines under the supervision of a pharmacist. The bill also expands the list of diagnostic tests pharmacists may administer and interpret in order to refer a patient as needed. These tests are often approved for at-home use, but pharmacists are currently not allowed to help administer those test for a patient needing assistance.

Pharmacists are highly trained medical professionals who can safely treat patients. Under their supervision, trained pharmacy technicians have been able to assist patients with no risk to [safety](#). By letting these professionals continue to treat patients in these ways, policymakers can preserve the patient choice that Michigan residents have enjoyed over the past several years. This would help to alleviate the existing strain on primary care doctors, so they can spend more time with the most complicated patients.

Pharmacists could play an even greater role than just immunizing patients and administering diagnostic tests. [Idaho](#), for example, grants pharmacists greater prescription authority, allowing even more patients to avoid crowded waiting rooms. The Great Lakes State should remove barriers like these in order to promote a more affordable, patient-centered health system.

The pandemic may be waning, but Michigan patients have not exhausted the benefits of greater patient choice that came through pandemic-era flexibilities. The Legislature should pass and Gov. Whitmer should sign these bills allowing pharmacists to deliver routine medical services.

Permission to reprint this blog post in whole or in part is hereby granted, provided that the author (or authors) and the Mackinac Center for Public Policy are properly cited.