

Campaign to support community pharmacy teams' mental health challenges

It has been widely reported that a very real negative impact of the Covid pandemic has been the significant toll it has taken on people's mental health.

As the pandemic took hold and pressures of the constantly evolving situation piled pressure onto primary care, the essential role that community pharmacies play became more evident and recognition was given to these essential healthcare workers as trusted, credible and professional healthcare providers. In line with feedback of deteriorating mental wellbeing from the general public, evidence shows that pharmacists and pharmacy teams have felt the impact even more as they stepped up to the plate and leaned in to support the rest of their country's exhausted health professionals as health systems were pushed to the max.

In the UK, the Royal Pharmaceutical Society in conjunction with the charity Pharmacist Support, reports evidence from its 2021 Workforce Wellbeing survey showing pressures on the pharmacy workforce continues to negatively impact on mental health and wellbeing, with high workloads and staff shortages clearly affecting the sector. A huge 89% of all survey respondents were deemed to be at high risk of burnout with a third (33%) having considered leaving their current role. Even more disturbing to learn is that a third (32%) of these vital key workers have even considered leaving the profession all together. Alarming current news of pharmacy teams experiencing violent and aggressive outbursts from the public have come to light, is only going to exacerbate stress and pressure even further.

This is not solely a UK issue, people living with mental ill health is one of the greatest public health challenges in the European region as measured by prevalence, burden of disease and disability. European surveys also reveal that more people are suffering from at least one mental health condition such as anxiety or depression and pressures on healthcare professionals are equally high.

Alliance Healthcare is united at creating healthier futures for all and our holistic approach extends to not just physical wellbeing, but mental health too. Given the crucial role pharmacy plays in society, Alphega Pharmacy - the leading European network of independent pharmacies – decided to implement a specific mental wellbeing programme. Coinciding with Mental Health Week in May, the programme based on a proven mental health support model – The Five Ways to Wellbeing Framework* - aimed to acknowledge just how difficult the past two years have been for these frontline healthcare workers.

Starting with a quiz to test people's knowledge of the true impact of mental health conditions on populations, the campaign focused on **'5 Days of Wellbeing'** and provided members with a set five, evidence-based – and practical - actions individuals can take in their everyday lives to improve their mental health and wellbeing such as:

1. Connecting with others
2. Being active – Swapping inactive pursuits with active ones
3. Giving – volunteering time, donating old clothes etc.
4. Taking notice – Focusing on your thoughts, emotions and surrounding
5. Keep learning- Learn new skills and develop yourself



From 9th to 13th May, a team of 48 Alphega business consultants from France, UK and Turkey took to the road to meet face to face with nearly 400 individual pharmacies across their territories, whilst in Spain, the Alphega team launched a digital campaign for its members, connecting with a further 100 pharmacies. Over just 5 days, team members took time to reach a total of circa 500 pharmacists (14% of the total members in those countries) asking “how they were” and running through the suggested programme activities which could help those experiencing challenges.

Alphega Turkey amplified the campaign further by organising a free webinar for its members via the Alphacademy webinar system. Delivered by independent expert Clinical Psychologist, Enver Bayatli, the session looked into "Psychological Resilience and Its Role in Communication" and gave member pharmacists the opportunity to ask questions and explore this important topic.

In addition, Spain instigated a virtual campaign targeted at their entire member population of over 1,000 pharmacies and included a special mental health focus in their member magazine.



Featuring an interview with Spanish celebrity Ángel Martín who publicly suffered a nervous breakdown, members fed back their thanks and appreciation for such an open, honest and insightful article.

Read the article in full [here](#)

Speaking of the programme Giulio Burzacca, European Managing Director of Alphega Pharmacy said, “We are acutely aware of the pressures our member pharmacists face and we wanted to highlight that mental wellbeing absolutely needs to be prioritised. We know a significant number of pharmacy staff are feeling overwhelmed and through our campaign we’ve raised awareness about the importance of looking after mental health just as much as physical. We want to encourage pharmacists and their teams to prioritise their mental wellbeing. Being holistically healthy will mean they can better serve and support their communities.”

This year was the inaugural year of the campaign, however Alphega is confident it will build on its success next year extending it to additional countries with Alphega members namely Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Romania, Italy, Germany and Portugal, as well as potentially extending the support to reach end consumers and patients. Furthermore, it will actively be supporting Global Mental Health Day on 10th October 2022.

Find out how much you know about the state of mental health wellbeing in Europe by taking the quiz [here](#) or scanning the QR code.



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Note to editor:

*The Five Ways to Wellbeing Framework was developed by the New Economics Foundation as a set of five evidence-based actions that promote wellbeing. Based on the latest scientific evidence the simple actions, if taken regularly, can improve wellbeing and enhance quality of life.

<https://neweconomics.org/2008/10/five-ways-to-wellbeing>

About Alphega Pharmacy:

Since its initial launch in 2001, Alphega Pharmacy has grown to support more 9,600* independent pharmacy members across ten** countries: the Czech Republic, France, , Spain, the Netherlands, the UK, Turkey, Romania plus Italy***, Germany*** and Portugal****.

Alphega Pharmacy is committed to helping its members to bring better health and wellbeing to their patients and consumers. Alphega Pharmacy offers clear branding, business mentoring, retail support services and supply benefits, together with pharmacy and IT solutions for operating more effectively and driving customer traffic and sales.

Alphega Pharmacy members benefit from being part of a European network of pharmacists, while at the same time, retaining their independence – a key consideration for many independent pharmacists.

Alphega Pharmacy operates with the full support of Alliance Healthcare, one of the largest pharmaceutical wholesalers in Europe. Alliance Healthcare is part of AmerisourceBergen, a leading global healthcare company, with a foundation in pharmaceutical distribution and solutions for manufacturers, pharmacies and providers.

www.alphega-pharmacy.com

* As at September 30, 2021.

** As at October 31, 2019

*** Associated businesses under separate ownership to Alliance Healthcare.

****Associated business not wholly owned by Alliance Healthcare.