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Sustainability in Pharmacy, Pharmacy Practice and Pharmacy Education

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Position paper 2025

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Sources: Stakeholder discussion held during EAFP 2023 Annual Conference in Valencia, Spain, and EAFP 2024 Annual Conference in Bergen, Norway;
EAFP members' comments on draft Position paper in 2024;
Approved / finalized by ExCo in Spring 2025;
Accepted on General Assembly during EAFP 2025 Conference in Coimbra, Portugal.

Scope

- To encourage pharmacy educators to reflect on sustainability in pharmacy, pharmacy practice and pharmacy education.
- To advocate for the integration of sustainability principles in pharmacy education and research.
- To promote sustainability of pharmacy as a profession.
- To catalyse initiatives and discussions that endorse sustainability in pharmacy on a European and global level.

Rationale

Sustainability is a global concern which extends beyond environmental concerns but also incorporates economic and social aspects (1). This position paper discusses sustainability in pharmacy practice, pharmacy education and pharmacy as a profession. The features identified encompass a merge of the academic perspective with expectations and perspectives expressed by stakeholders representing different settings of practice.

Definition

In this position paper we define sustainability as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (1). It encompasses environmental, economic, and social dimensions, as reflected in the 17 UN sustainability goals (2). In the pharmacy setting sustainability can pertain to for example reducing the environmental impact of drug manufacturing and use, educating and maintaining a viable pharmacy workforce, and contributing to a more equitable health care system.

Sustainability in pharmacy education and research

EAFP considers the incorporation of sustainability into pharmacy curricula as being an important foundation to help establish core competencies of future pharmacists. Learning objectives can be developed to help ensure that students appreciate the role of sustainability in healthcare whilst emphasizing relevance of environmental, economic and social factors (3).

Interdisciplinary approaches should be adopted to provide students with a holistic perspective on sustainable delivery of healthcare. Core terms, such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (2), and the WHO concept of One Health (4) should be covered in the curriculum. Students should be provided with opportunities to participate in initiatives which focus on sustainability of health services during experiential learning sessions. The integration of real-world case studies from various pharmaceutical settings including pharmaceutical industry, pharmaceutical policy and patient settings help demonstrate the impact of sustainability on pharmaceutical decision making.

It is recommended that faculties promote innovative research initiatives which focus on sustainable pharmaceutical services and encourage sustainable procedures within research programmes.

It is recommended that faculties incorporate sustainability, and the UN 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in their existing curriculum and thus contribute to pharmaceutical workforce development so as to support sustainability in the delivery of services.

It is recommended that faculties work to establish continuing professional development courses and other opportunities for lifelong learning focusing on different aspects of sustainability. Giving not only students, but also established pharmacists the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills around sustainability will hasten the necessary transition of the workforce and the different pharmacy disciplines and workplaces.

Sustainability in pharmacy practice

EAFP recognizes that sustainability should be incorporated within different dimensions of pharmacy practice ranging from green pharmacy practices to implementation of cost-effective strategies and use of ethically-sourced materials. Pharmacists hold a social responsibility to champion equitable access to essential medication, addressing health inequalities and supporting affordable healthcare options whilst prioritising patient-centric care.

Pharmacy education should support graduates to develop into green pharmacy ambassadors as they join the pharmaceutical workforce in the various sectors. Pharmacists have a pivotal role in foreseeing proper pharmaceutical waste management, promote energy-saving measures within pharmaceutical processes leading to reduced energy consumption including sustainable packaging materials and efficient synthetic pathways, address the environmental impact of medicines and drive policy strategies that contribute to reduction of waste of medicinal products.

It is recommended that faculties provide students with exposure to real life case studies, drawn from different pharmaceutical settings, to equip them with skills and competences required to support equal affordable healthcare and to enable them to become green pharmacy ambassadors.

It is recommended to introduce sustainability as a key quality indicator in curriculum development and evaluation as well as in pharmacy quality systems.

Sustainability of pharmacy as a profession

A responsibility of pharmacy educators is to ensure pharmaceutical workforce capacity building to ensure that the profession is sustainable from a quantitative and qualitative perspective (5). EAFP recognises that sustainability of the profession relies on attracting students into the pharmacy programmes that have the appropriate skill set, motivation and aptitudes towards the profession. Pharmacy education should be developed in a way that ensures curriculum relevance, competence development, practice readiness whilst at the same time supporting student retention and academic capacity building. Opportunities for continuous professional development and post-graduate studies and research support the sustainable evolution of the pharmaceutical workforce.

By collaborating with pharmaceutical stakeholders, EAFP recognises the need for research and informed dialogue to support transformation in pharmaceutical processes and practices. Thus, opportunities presented through delegation of tasks and adoption of automation and digital technology can be assessed and introduced.

It is recommended that faculties participate in national and regional discussions with pharmaceutical stakeholders to support pharmaceutical processes and practice transformation so as to ensure effective and efficient use of the pharmaceutical workforce.

It is recommended that the pharmacy profession takes the lead in limiting the potential ill-effects that drugs throughout their life-cycle may cause on human health by negatively affecting the environment, and that the profession works towards having this field of responsibility recognised across the health professions.

Links:

1. World Commission on Environment and Development. Our common future ("Brundtland's Report"). 1987. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-common-future.pdf>
2. United Nations. 17 Goals of Sustainable Development. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>
3. Chen EYH, Forrester C, McEvoy AM, Singleton J. Pharmacy students' perceptions on environmental sustainability in pharmacy education and practice. *Explor Res Clin Soc Pharm.* 2023;12:100366. doi: 10.1016/j.rcsop.2023.100366. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10692703/>
4. WHO. One-health. https://www.who.int/health-topics/one-health#tab=tab_1
5. FIP. The FIP Global Roadmap 2030: Sustainable advancement for pharmacy worldwide. High-level Report by the FIP Bureau, Sept 2022. <https://developmentgoals.fip.org/globalroadmap2030/>