

Management of the COVID-19 pandemic in Switzerland: Roles and challenges of an interhospital pharmacy

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Abstract

From March 16 to June 18, 2020, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Swiss Federal Council declared an “extraordinary situation” in terms of the Epidemics Act. The present work assesses the roles of an interhospital pharmacy in the fight against SARS-CoV-2 in Switzerland, in the frame of the Coordinated Medical Service. During this time, all missions performed by the pharmacy were systematically collected and evaluated. They were also compared to its official duties. Specific missions have been mainly managed by the crisis unit and the 4 departments of the pharmacy (Logistics, Manufacturing, Clinical Pharmacy and Nursing Homes Supply): (1) guarantee continuity of human resources, (2) internal infrastructure securing (especially in terms of hygiene), (3) specific drug supply (e.g. anaesthetics, sedatives, antivirals, incl. for clinical trials), (4) hand disinfectant production and supply, (5) clinical assistance (especially in the Critical Care units), (6) individual drug manufacturing, (7) management of ward pharmacies, and (8) hygienic masks supply for healthcare professionals in the area. The missions (4) and (8) were out of the usual duties of the pharmacy and have been achieved with the support of the Swiss civil protection. A particular difficulty was the management of the shortage of various products and the identification of alternative therapeutic options. In conclusion, our pharmacy has faced various challenges during the first wave of the pandemic. Some missions performed were even beyond the traditional duties. Based on the lessons learned from this pandemic, the disaster plan of our pharmacy, as well as the associated staff training, have been further developed.

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