

NEWSLETTER

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FLU SEASON IS HERE

As flu season approaches, medical schemes are placing strong emphasis on increasing vaccination uptake among their members, and pharmacies play a pivotal role in achieving this goal.

Influenza is more than just a seasonal inconvenience; it can lead to serious complications, particularly for high-risk groups such as the elderly, young children, pregnant women, and individuals with chronic conditions. Vaccination remains the most effective way to reduce the risk of infection, hospitalisation, and flu-related complications.

Why this matters to medical schemes

Medical schemes are prioritising flu vaccinations as part of their preventative care strategies. Higher vaccination rates contribute to:

- Reduced hospital admissions and healthcare costs
- Improved member health outcomes
- Lower absenteeism and productivity losses

In this edition:

- Flu vaccination time
- Boosting Pneumococcal Vaccinations
- The pharmacy's role in medicine adherence
- Reminder: PCNS fees
- Using the correct ICD10 code
- Supporting schemes with chronic authorisations
- Reduce script rejections at the counter
- Bonitas: the way forward

Pharmacies are often the most accessible healthcare touchpoint for members, making them ideally positioned to drive vaccination uptake.

Your role extends beyond administration to active advocacy and education:

- Promote awareness by engaging with members collecting medication, particularly those at higher risk, and encourage vaccination
- Leverage your interaction with chronic patients and identify eligible members to recommend the flu vaccine
- Offer convenient walk-in vaccinations where possible
- Educate and reassure patients by addressing common misconceptions and emphasise the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine

While pharmacies are key enablers, flu vaccination is part of a broader, coordinated healthcare approach involving medical schemes, healthcare providers, and patients. Your participation strengthens this ecosystem and supports preventative care initiatives across the board.

Only trivalent influenza vaccines will be available in South Africa for the 2026 season, in line with the World Health Organisation 2026 Southern Hemisphere influenza vaccine recommendation.

All Scriptpharm client medical schemes will cover **Influvac single dose 0.5ml with NAPPI code 732826** at R71.81 (VAT excluded). Quadrivalent vaccine claims will not be approved for payment in 2026.

We encourage all pharmacies within the network to actively support flu vaccination initiatives.

Let's work together to protect our communities this flu season.



BOOSTING PNEUMOCOCCAL VACCINATIONS: THE PHARMACY'S ROLE IN PROTECTING PATIENTS

Pneumococcal disease is a leading cause of serious illness such as pneumonia, meningitis and bloodstream infections – especially in older adults and patients with chronic conditions. Yet, vaccination rates remain below optimal levels across many medical schemes. Pharmacies are uniquely positioned to help close this gap.

Why pneumococcal vaccination matters

- Protects high-risk groups (≥ 65 years, chronic disease, immunocompromised patients)
- Reduces hospital admissions and complications
- Supports preventative care goals of medical schemes
- Lowers overall healthcare costs through avoided illness

The Pharmacy Advantage

Pharmacies are often the most accessible healthcare touchpoint for patients. This places the pharmacy teams at the frontline of prevention. Pharmacies can:

- Identify eligible patients during routine dispensing
- Educate patients on vaccine benefits and timing
- Administer vaccines (where applicable) or refer appropriately
- Reinforce adherence to scheme-funded preventative benefits

How pharmacies can actively support vaccine uptake

1. **Proactively identify patients** by using dispensing data to flag patients:
 - Over 65 years of age

Encourage your pharmacy team to identify, educate and support eligible patients in accessing pneumococcal vaccines.

Let's make prevention part of every prescription.

- With chronic conditions (e.g. diabetes, asthma, cardiovascular disease)
- With repeated antibiotic use (possible infection risk indicator)

2. **Start the conversation** – a simple prompt can make a big difference:

“Did you know your medical scheme may cover pneumococcal vaccine that can help prevent serious lung and brain infections?” Further note that it is recommended for older adults and patients with chronic illnesses.

3. **Promote scheme benefits** – many medical schemes cover pneumococcal vaccines under preventative care benefits. Pharmacies should understand scheme-specific rules and funding to inform patients of eligibility and access pathways to help reduce missed opportunities due to lack of awareness. Although all Scriptpharm client medical schemes include pneumococcal vaccines as part of their preventative care risk benefits, different qualifying criteria may apply based on the relevant scheme rules.

4. **Make it visible** by displaying in-store educational materials like posters and shelf talkers near dispensary areas.

5. **Enable convenient access** by offering in-pharmacy vaccination services where permitted, partner with nurses or clinics if needed, and allow walk-in vaccinations to reduce barriers.

Improving vaccination uptake requires collaboration between pharmacies, medical schemes and patients. Every patient interaction is an opportunity to prevent serious illness.

MEDICINE ADHERENCE: A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Medicine adherence — taking medication exactly as prescribed in terms of dose, timing, and duration — remains one of the most important drivers of positive health outcomes, particularly in the management of chronic conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, and HIV.

Yet, despite its importance, sub-optimal adherence continues to be a significant challenge across healthcare systems. Poor adherence is directly linked to disease progression, avoidable hospital admissions, and increased healthcare costs, placing additional pressure on both members and medical schemes.

For medical schemes, adherence is not just a clinical concern — it is a key factor of benefit sustainability and effective healthcare utilisation.

Pharmacies: At the Centre of Adherence Support

Pharmacies are uniquely positioned to play a pivotal role in improving medicine adherence. As the most frequent point of contact in a member's healthcare journey, pharmacists have the opportunity to influence behaviour, reinforce treatment plans, and identify risks early. Their role extends far beyond dispensing medication — it includes active participation in supporting members throughout their treatment journey.



How Pharmacies Support Better Adherence

1. Reinforcing Understanding at every interaction; pharmacists ensure that members **clearly understand**:
 - How and when to take their medication
 - The importance of completing treatment
 - What to do if a dose is missed
2. Through **regular engagement**, pharmacies can quickly identify challenges such as:
 - Side effects
 - Complex treatment regimens
 - Misconceptions about medication
 - Early intervention — including referral back to the prescriber where necessary — prevents drop-off and treatment failure.
3. Pharmacies play a key role in supporting ongoing treatment through **reminders**:
 - Sending refill reminders
 - Following up on missed collections
 - Encouraging consistent medicine use
 - These interventions are especially important for chronic conditions requiring long-term therapy.
4. **Simple tools** can make a meaningful difference, including:
 - Pill organisers
 - Blister packaging
 - Printed dosing schedules
 - Inhaler technique support for respiratory conditions
5. Pharmacists can **tailor adherence support** based on the condition, for example:
 - Emphasising daily consistency in hypertension
 - Linking medication to meals in diabetes
 - Reinforcing correct inhaler use in asthma
 - Supporting stigma-sensitive counselling in HIV
 - Partnering with Medical Schemes for impact

Medical schemes and pharmacy networks achieve the best results when working collaboratively. By using data to identify at-risk members and focusing interventions where they are most needed, pharmacies can deliver targeted, high-impact support.

Structured adherence programmes, supported by pharmacy engagement, digital tools and clear communication, enable:

- Early identification of non-adherence
- Timely intervention
- Improved clinical outcomes
- More efficient use of healthcare benefits

Improving medicine adherence is not the responsibility of one stakeholder alone. It requires alignment between members, healthcare providers, pharmacies, and medical schemes. However, pharmacies remain a critical touchpoint — bridging the gap between prescribing and real-world medicine use.

Strengthening medicine adherence is one of the most effective ways to improve member health outcomes while ensuring the sustainability of medical scheme benefits. By continuing to support, educate and engage members at every opportunity, pharmacies play an indispensable role in turning treatment plans into real, measurable health outcomes.



REMINDER: ENSURE YOUR PCNS FEES ARE UP TO DATE WITH BHF

Pharmacies are reminded of the importance of maintaining an active status with the Board of Healthcare Funders (BHF) by ensuring that annual PCNS (Practice Code Numbering System) fees are paid and up to date.

The BHF has indicated that providers with outstanding PCNS fees may face suspension from the system. This will have a direct and immediate impact on pharmacy operations.

If your BHF status is inactive due to unpaid PCNS fees, your pharmacy **claims cannot be paid**; an active status is required for successful claims processing and reimbursement as well as continued participation in medical scheme pharmacy networks.

What you need to do:

- Verify your current PCNS fee status with BHF
- Settle any outstanding fees urgently
- Keep proof of payment for reference and audit purposes

Pharmacies are strongly encouraged to act immediately to avoid claim rejections, cash flow disruption and potential suspension.

For further information or assistance, please contact BHF directly on 087 210 0500 or pcnsfinance@global.com.

ACCURATE ICD-10 CODING MATTERS

In today's evolving healthcare environment, accurate data is essential to ensure effective patient care, appropriate reimbursement and regulatory compliance. One of the most critical elements in pharmacy claims submission is the correct use of ICD-10 codes. While often viewed as administrative requirements, ICD-10 coding plays a far more significant role in the broader healthcare ecosystem.

ICD-10 codes provide a standardised way to classify and report diagnoses and health conditions. For pharmacies, these codes are increasingly required when submitting claims, particularly for chronic medications, high-cost therapies, and certain regulated items.

Accurate ICD-10 coding ensures that:

- The prescribed treatment aligns with the patient's diagnosed condition and treatment plan
- Claims are processed efficiently and reimbursed correctly
- Clinical risk management and benefit design are supported
- Data reporting to medical schemes and regulators is accurate and reliable

Incorrect, incomplete or non-specific ICD-10 codes are a leading cause of claim rejections and delays. This not only affects pharmacy cash flow but also creates additional administrative work for pharmacy staff and frustration for patients.

Some common issues seen in ICD-10 coding include use of overly generic or unspecified codes, mismatch between medication and diagnosis and missing codes in claims where required.

To improve accuracy, pharmacies should:

- Ensure pharmacists and dispensing staff are trained on ICD-10 requirements
- Verify ICD-10 codes on prescriptions before dispensing
- Engage prescribers when codes are missing or unclear
- Use system validations where available to flag errors

Accurate coding helps ensure that patients receive the right treatment for the right condition, reinforcing the pharmacy's role as a key partner in patient care. As part of our ongoing commitment to excellence, we encourage all network pharmacies to review their current processes and reinforce best practices in ICD-10 coding.



CHRONIC AUTHORISATION: SUPPORTING BETTER PATIENT OUTCOMES

Chronic medication authorisation and registration processes are often viewed as administrative requirements, but they play a far more important role in ensuring that patients receive appropriate, safe and sustainable cover over the long term.

At their core, these processes are designed to confirm that a patient's condition, treatment plan and ongoing medication needs align with clinical guidelines and scheme benefits. By registering patients on the correct chronic disease programmes, medical schemes ensure that members receive consistent access to their essential medicines, while also enabling better monitoring of treatment outcomes.

From a patient perspective proper **chronic registration helps to:**

- Ensure uninterrupted access to approved medication
- Reduce out-of-pocket costs by aligning treatment with scheme benefits
- Support continuity of care and appropriate disease management

While the specific details of processes may differ between medical schemes, the underlying goal remains the same: to balance patient access to medically necessary treatment with responsible healthcare funding.

Scheme	Contact number
Polmed	0860 104 111
Bonitas	0861 100 220
MBMed	0860 002 109
SAMWUMED	0860 333 387
Fedhealth	0861 112 666 / 0860 002 153

Pharmacies play a critical role in this process. By guiding patients through registration requirements, ensuring that the correct documentation is submitted and maintaining accurate records, pharmacies help bridge the gap between patients, prescribers and funders.

All Scriptpharm client schemes apply the same chronic authorisation and registration process through Medscheme, their managed care services provider, by registering the chronic condition on the Chronic Medicine Management Programme. Pharmacists may apply for authorisation to register the chronic condition on behalf of the patient.

← The table provides the relevant scheme specific contact numbers to be used.

REDUCE PRESCRIPTION REJECTIONS AT THE COUNTER

Rejected claims can create unnecessary delays for patients and added administrative work for pharmacy teams. A few simple checks at the point of dispensing can significantly reduce rework and improve overall patient experience.

- Confirm benefit availability, especially for high-cost or non-formulary items
- Ensure chronic medication authorisations are active and aligned to the prescribed treatment
- Double check NAPPI codes, quantities and pack sizes before submitting claims
- Be mindful of scheme-specific rules, such as quantity limits or preferred products
- Where applicable, consider generic alternatives that meet benefit requirements

Taking a few extra seconds upfront can help prevent avoidable rejections, reduce follow-up queries, and support smoother claims processing. This not only improves workflow efficiency in the pharmacy but also ensures patients receive their medication without unnecessary delays.



BONITAS: THE WAY FORWARD

Pharmacies are informed that Bonitas Medical Fund (Bonitas) has recently made changes to its administration and managed care arrangements. With effect from 1 June 2026, administration services have transitioned to Momentum Health, while managed care services have moved to Private Health Administrators Pty Ltd (PHA).

These changes have been communicated publicly by Bonitas. This notice only serves to ensure that all pharmacies within the Scriptpharm Bonitas pharmacy network are aware of the developments.

At present, no immediate action is required from pharmacies. Engagement with the relevant stakeholders is ongoing, and further information will be shared in due course regarding any changes to processes such as claims submission, authorisations, and network arrangements, as well as any potential impact on network pharmacies.

Pharmacies are requested to monitor future communications, as additional updates will be provided once more information becomes available.



Thank you for reading this edition of the Scriptpharm Newsletter. We look forward to sharing more updates, insights and opportunities with you in our next edition later in 2026.

Share your questions, feedback or suggestions for future topics with us at networks@scriptpharm.co.za – we'd love to include your voice in future editions.