



August 4, 2022

The Honorable Xavier Becerra
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra:

Monkeypox is a growing concern both across the U.S. and globally. On August 4, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) declared monkeypox a public health emergency following the July 23 announcement from the World Health Organization (WHO) declaring a global health emergency. There are over 6,600 reported cases in the U.S., with numbers quickly rising. Pharmacists are well positioned to administer monkeypox vaccines for pre- and post-exposure prophylaxis of healthcare workers, patients, their close contacts, and populations at risk for severe disease from monkeypox virus (such as people with HIV or other immunocompromising conditions). To ensure timely access to vaccines for monkeypox, we recommend that HHS issue a Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness (PREP) Act declaration to allow pharmacists to order and administer monkeypox vaccines.

ASHP is the collective voice of pharmacists who serve as patient care providers in hospitals, health systems, ambulatory clinics, and other healthcare settings spanning the full spectrum of medication use. The organization's more than 60,000 members include pharmacists, student pharmacists, and pharmacy technicians. For 80 years, ASHP has been at the forefront of efforts to improve medication use and enhance patient safety.

As the monkeypox outbreak continues to grow both domestically and globally, we urge you to act quickly so that pharmacists may order and administer vaccines to prevent monkeypox virus infection in vulnerable populations.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, pharmacists demonstrated their ability to be a source of timely access to vaccines on a national scale. In the case of monkeypox, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that the vaccine be given within 4 days from the date of exposure for the best chance to prevent onset of the disease, and within 14 days to reduce symptoms of the disease. When patients access care from a pharmacist, directing the patient to another provider for vaccine administration would unnecessarily delay administration. To ensure pharmacists are able to expand access as vaccine supplies increase, we urge you to proactively authorize pharmacists to order and administer monkeypox vaccines.

ASHP also urges HHS to proactively coordinate with payers, including Medicare and Medicaid, to ensure adequate reimbursement is available to support access to these services when provided by pharmacists. We welcome the opportunity to work with you to identify conditions under which pharmacists should administer monkeypox vaccines to our patients.

Sincerely,

Tom Kraus, J.D.
Vice President, Government Relations

cc:

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