

Photo credit: SwipeRx, formerly known as mClinica



IMPROVING PHARMACY ACCESS TO QUALITY ASSURED COVID-19 ANTIGEN TESTS IN VIET NAM

BACKGROUND

Access to affordable, quality assured rapid antigen tests (Ag-RDTs) is key to managing the COVID-19 pandemic response. As part of this, the World Health Organization Emergency Use Listing (WHO-EUL) is designed to expedite the availability of such tests through the assessment and listing of verified products.

In South-East Asia, local pharmacies are a critical source of COVID-19 testing and testing advice for the people and communities they serve. Recognizing their potential as a distribution channel for WHO-EUL Ag-RDTs, in early 2021, FIND, the global alliance for diagnostics, came together with SwipeRx (formerly known as mClinica) to test the ability of a digital network of pharmacy professionals to improve access to WHO-EUL Ag-RDTs in Viet Nam.

WHY ARE PHARMACIES IMPORTANT?

- Convenient locations
- Long opening hours (even in lockdown)
- Fast, efficient services

UNDERSTANDING THE BASELINE

In September 2021, three WHO-EUL Ag-RDT brands were registered with the Vietnamese Ministry of Health. According to a digital survey of 426 pharmacy professionals, 29% stocked COVID-19 Ag-RDTs at the time data was collected. Data also showed that just 46% had been trained on any topic related to COVID-19, including testing.

MARKET ACTIVATION

Survey findings were used to develop and pilot a digital market activation programme encouraging pharmacies in Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh City to stock and promote WHO-EUL Ag-RDTs by:

- Raising awareness on the benefits of quality assured, WHO-EUL Ag-RDTs
- Supporting the professional development of pharmacists and students
- Providing key information on approved local test suppliers

RESULTS

Through SwipeRx, the following results were achieved in 4 months, beginning in December 2021:



57,004 app and social media accounts

were exposed to digital education tools and supplier information



344 pharmacy professionals and students

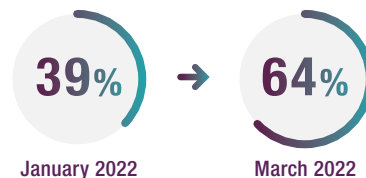
were educated about WHO-EUL Ag-RDTs in collaboration with the Ho Chi Minh City Pharmacy Association



10,294 WHO-EUL tests

were purchased by SwipeRx users at 60 pharmacies in Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh City, promoted through the app

As a result, the proportion of pharmacies stocking at least one WHO-EUL test significantly increased in less than three months.



CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

Launched during the outbreak of the Omicron variant in Viet Nam, the programme generated substantial improvements in pharmacy availability of WHO-EUL Ag-RDTs at a time when educational activities and door-to-door pharmacy sales were restricted by the pandemic.

Looking forward, FIND and SwipeRx will continue to work together and explore ways to improve pharmacy access to quality assured, self-use Ag-RDTs in Viet Nam and South-East Asia.