

Economic Empowerment of Women through Expanded Pharmacy Access to Aged Care in Vietnam



Problem: Women carry the weight of unpaid care for older family members and face gendered barriers to business leadership in the pharmacy sector

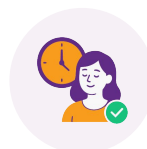
Vietnam's population is rapidly aging, increasing pressure on the national health system and intensifying reliance on unpaid, at-home caregivers, who are predominantly women. The multiple, inter-related health risks affecting older adults creates additional pressure for caregivers at home who are often responsible for encouraging adherence to prescribed medicine as well as recommended nutrition, hygiene and health monitoring practices. Pharmacies are a major source of medicine and advice for older adults in Vietnam. Whereas women represent 80% of all pharmacy workers, only 28% of pharmacy owners are women.¹ This gap reflects a broader global pattern of underrepresentation of women in pharmacy entrepreneurship.² Regional data indicates that this disparity has been attributed to structural and gender-related barriers, including unequal access to financing, supply chains, as well as training and mentorship needed for pharmacists to thrive as pharmacy owners as well as practitioners.³

Solution: Expand pharmacy access to health products to grow pharmacies' business opportunities and support at-home care responsibilities

There's an opportunity to advance gender equality by reducing unpaid caregiving responsibilities for at-home caregivers, who are predominantly women, and strengthening pharmacy business growth opportunities for women pharmacists. SwipeRx, with support from Investing in Women, an initiative of the Australian Government, identified specific aged care health products not yet accessible through pharmacies in Vietnam. Given how frequently older adults and their caregivers visit a neighborhood pharmacy, expanding access to aged care products through this channel can generate multiple benefits including:



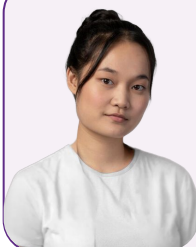
Improved quality of health for older adults



Reduced unpaid caregiving time & stress for caregivers



Increased business growth opportunities for pharmacists



"In the morning, I wake up early to help my grandmother take her diabetes medication. After breakfast, I help her measure her blood pressure. In the evening, I also need to make sure she takes medication. It's a lot for me to remember."

Caregiver's Challenge



"I've just started carrying a product that can help you, a medicine box with a simple automated alarm could reduce the need for you to closely manage every dose she takes throughout the day."

Pharmacist's Solution

¹ SwipeRx digital survey data, 2022

² International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) (2025). Empowering women: Advancing female entrepreneurship in community pharmacy

³ SwipeRx 2026, Gender Gap Analysis Report, <https://www.swiperx.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Gender-Gap-Analysis-of-SwipeRx-Digital-Platform-March-2026.pdf>

Pharmacy Access to Aged Care:
Products with Potential Benefits

During early 2026, SwipeRx conducted a rapid market scan to identify health products not yet accessible through community pharmacies but with potential to improve aged healthcare and alleviate unpaid caregiving responsibility and stress in the Vietnam health system market context. The table below summarizes products identified in consultation with manufacturers, distributors and pharmacy retailers in Vietnam:

e-Health Products	
	Button-display smartwatch: supports remote health monitoring, automatic fall detection and e-updates for caregivers.
	Wearable SOS alert button: enables older adults to send emergency alerts to caregivers in case of emergency.
Adherence & Monitoring Products	
	Pill box organiser with alarm: supports medication adherence and reduces daily reminder responsibilities for caregivers.
	Continuous glucose monitoring patch: supports diabetes management and medicine adherence and reduces daily monitoring responsibilities for caregivers.
Fall Risk Reduction & Safety Products	
	Anti-slip adhesive tape: reduces risk of slips and falls at home.
	Motion light sensor: improves visibility and reduces risk of night-time fall.
	Skin protection sleeves: reduces risks of bruising, tearing, wounds and infections.
	Penile clamp: Reduces risks associated with night-time falls and sleep disruption among men experiencing urinary incontinence and reduces caregiving stress related to sleep disruption as well as hygiene.

Navigating Pharmacy Access Pathways

Informed by consultations with pharmacy market actors in Vietnam, SwipeRx identified market access pathways for two types of products:



for products already legally available in Vietnam but not yet sold through community pharmacies at scale—such as continuous blood glucose monitoring patches—there is an immediate opportunity to integrate these products into established distribution networks already serving retail pharmacies. Pharmacy-specific pricing and delivery terms can serve as a stimulus to pharmacy stocking for these types of products.



for products not yet legally available in Vietnam—such as the penile clamp—registration and importation steps need to be cleared before these products can be integrated into distribution networks serving pharmacies.

To support pharmacy access to all identified products, training and post-training support for pharmacy workers is recommended to build skills and commitment to stock and dispense new products to older customers and their caregivers appropriately.



Pharmacists analyzing benefits of expanding aged care product offerings at a workshop in Ho Chi Minh City.

Next Steps

Expanded pharmacy access to aged-care health products and services can create economic benefit for women on both sides of the pharmacy counter. For women caregivers, easier access to practical aged-care products can reduce the time, stress and responsibility of unpaid care, freeing more of their time for paid economic activities as well as non-work leisure. At the same time, integrating these products into retail pharmacy offerings can create new revenue opportunities for women pharmacists' serving as both trusted community healthcare providers as well as business leaders.

Disclaimer: This publication is supported by the Australian Government through the Investing in Women initiative. The views expressed in this publication are the author's alone and are not necessarily the views of the Australian Government.