

**FEATURE ADDRESS**  
**THE HONOURABLE DR. RISARD SEECHARAN**  
**MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH**  
**AT THE**  
**THE PHARMACEUTICAL SOCIETY OF TRINIDAD & TOBAGO**  
**ANNUAL CONFERENCE**  
**SUNDAY JULY 20, 2025**  
**HYATT REGENCY HOTEL, PORT OF SPAIN**  
**8:30 AM**

Good Morning,

It is indeed an honour to be with you today as we gather under a theme that resonates so deeply with the future of healthcare in our nation, “Optimizing Pharmacy for Better Patient Care.” I bring greetings on behalf of the Honourable Dr. Lackram Bodoie, Minister of Health, who sends his warmest regards and best wishes for the success of today’s proceedings.

Today’s theme could not be more timely or relevant. We stand at a pivotal moment in the evolution of healthcare, one shaped by global challenges, technological advances and the rising demands of our population.

Pharmacists play a vital role in advancing our vision for a healthier society. Pharmacists are central to our efforts in achieving the World Health Organization's Sustainable Development Goal 3.8, which is Universal Health Coverage for all.

Pharmacists are often the first and sometimes the only healthcare professionals people see. Their work in medication guidance, chronic disease care and prevention is not just helpful it's essential. Hence, your dedication and expertise is valued and we are here to support and strengthen your role.

Pharmacy today is being redefined not only by the growing complexity of medications and treatments but by a convergence of global pressures: drug shortages, supply chain disruptions, evolving regulatory frameworks, and an ever-expanding role in patient education and care. These realities require robust strategies grounded in efficiency, ethics, and evidence-based practice.

The root causes vary, from international product discontinuation to low local consumption that results in high wastage and expiry. Indeed, this has been a significant issue:

with 1,500 formulary items, wastage and expiry remain high, especially for slow-moving stock, despite rigorous monitoring.

This is why we are undertaking a comprehensive review and modernization of the Chronic Disease Assistance Programme (CDAP). Beyond affordability, CDAP must reflect current clinical standards, appropriate medication selection, and efficient distribution models that reduce both stockouts and wastage.

We are also actively reviewing inventory management practices, informed by global insights.

This includes leveraging technology for better forecasting, supply chain transparency, and automation ensuring that every prescription written can be filled promptly and safely.

Our data reveals that approximately 250 licensed pharmacies currently dispense CDAP medications. However, the distribution remains uneven, with urban areas significantly better served than rural communities. While we are unable to distinctly measure pharmacist-to-population ratios by region given the mobility of our public health professionals, we acknowledge the urgent need to expand services in rural areas, ensuring no community is left behind.

Hence, our vision includes the expansion of rural pharmacy access and greater collaboration between private and public sector providers. These steps will help us bridge the geographic divide and bring pharmacy services closer to those who need them most.

A recent study on Optimizing Pharmacy Operations, published by the International Journal of Research and Innovations in Pharmacy Practice rightly emphasizes the need for interdisciplinary collaboration, technology integration and quality assurance.

Technologies such as automated dispensing systems, electronic health records and inventory control platforms can revolutionize how we manage stock, forecast demand and avoid drug shortages. In fact, supply chain optimization is a priority area, and one that we will tackle collaboratively with pharmacists at the helm.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me be clear: the Ministry of Health sees pharmacists not as support staff but as co-leaders in healthcare reform. We count on you to uphold ethical standards, advance your skills, and champion medication safety. Whether through community education, clinical interventions, or digital health applications, your voice is essential.

As we navigate the complex realities of drug shortages, supply chain volatility and regulatory alignment, I am proud to note that Trinidad and Tobago has taken a step forward through the recent signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Health and the Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission.

This agreement fosters collaboration on medicine quality standards, regulatory harmonization and technical cooperation that will elevate the robustness of our pharmaceutical system.

Pharmacists, we need your continued vigilance, not just in dispensing, but in advocacy, education and partnership. We are working toward a pharmaceutical system that is patient-centered, efficient and resilient, but, we cannot do it without you.

In closing, I want to recognize the dedication and service of every pharmacist, technician, and student represented here today. Your work saves lives, prevents harm, and delivers hope. The Ministry of Health reaffirms its commitment to supporting you as essential partners in delivering quality care.

Let us continue to optimize pharmacy, not just for better patient care but for a healthier Trinidad and Tobago.

I thank you.