

EXPLORING THE PATH(S) LESS TRAVELED: DETERMINING NON-DIRECT PATIENT CARE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PHARMACISTS

Kathryn A. Morbitzer, PharmD, MS, Mary R. McClurg, PharmD, MHS, Sahaana R. Veeravalli, Swaycha Goli, Jacqueline E. McLaughlin, PhD, MS

BACKGROUND

- According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there is a **-2% projected job growth in traditional pharmacist roles** over the next 10 years, meaning **pharmacists will need to continue to create new career opportunities**^{1,2}
- Over the past 10 years, pharmacy school applications have **decreased by more than 40%**³
 - One reason for decline includes perceived stagnant job market²
- Schools and colleges of pharmacy must **provide students with opportunities to differentiate themselves**
- While schools generally prioritize training for employment within direct patient care settings, **opportunities in non-direct patient care environments exist**⁴

PURPOSE

- To explore healthcare employer perspectives on current and emerging non-direct patient care opportunities for pharmacists and how training for these opportunities can be incorporated into Doctor of Pharmacy curricula

METHODS

- Purposive sampling** used to recruit healthcare employers for **60-minute focus groups** in 2022
- During focus groups, participants asked about:
 - CURRENT and EMERGING** opportunities for pharmacists in non-direct patient care environments
 - KNOWLEDGE and SKILLS** needed to be competitive for and successful in these positions
 - TYPES OF ACTIVITIES** to help learn most effectively
 - CONTEXTS** these topics and skills are best taught in
 - BARRIERS** that may prevent PharmD graduates from successfully competing for opportunities within non-direct patient care areas
- Qualitative data collected from **39 participants** during **16 focus groups**
- Inductive coding** used to identify common themes
- Transcripts were **thematically coded** independently by two researchers
- All codes were reviewed and **any discrepancies were discussed** until consensus was reached

Current and Emerging Opportunities



Knowledge and Skills Needed



Types of Activities and Contexts to Learn Effectively



Barriers



RESULTS

Themes

- Managed care, pharmaceutical industry, consulting, and health policy identified as current top areas for non-direct patient care opportunities
- Emerging areas identified included technology/informatics, data science, and medical devices

Example Quote

I think there are limited patient care opportunities for pharmacists, especially in dispensing, moving forward...the role of pharmacists has to shift to something else.

Themes

- Essential knowledge and skills identified included having a strong clinical background, basic understanding of business principles and drug development process, and teamwork and leadership skills

Example Quote

If people want to go into non-patient care roles, they really need to have a good understanding of business fundamentals while at the same time understanding those power skills.

Themes

- Students should differentiate themselves through specialized tracks, pathways, certificates, and/or dual degree programs
- Particularly important since pharmacy graduates will compete against business and public health school graduates

Example Quote

It's important to think about ways to create specialized tracks without adding on additional years...we need to provide these opportunities within the existing curriculum.

CONCLUSIONS

- Non-direct patient care opportunities continue to expand for pharmacists
- Schools and colleges of pharmacy should consider adapting their curricula to emphasize knowledge and skills needed to succeed in non-direct patient care areas

REFERENCES

1. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2022.
2. Lebovitz L. Am J Pharm Educ. 2019;83(1):4-11.
3. American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy. 2021.
4. Mott DA. J Am Pharm Assoc. 2016; 56(4):433-40.