



Improving the Public's Perception of Pharmacy in West Virginia One Activity at a Time

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To estimate the impact on public perception of student pharmacist involvement in the University of Charleston School of Pharmacy's advocacy-based co-curricular activities during the 2022-2023 academic year.

Methods: University of Charleston School of Pharmacy students participate in a required badge system to document their co-curricular activities. Students must complete at least three applicable activities to earn each of the six badges. From August 2022 through March 2023, students participated in several activities that allowed them to interact with members of the public, giving them the opportunity to impact public perception of the pharmacy profession. The activities included Save-A-Life Day, Rural Health Day at the Capitol, Pharmacy Day at the Capitol, the Out of the Darkness Walk as well as various health fairs. By collecting data on the number of students and members of the public involved in the activities, we can estimate the impact on the public's perception of pharmacy.

Results: Nearly 700 members of the public were impacted by selected activities coordinated by 77 students and 13 faculty/staff members during the 2022-2023 academic year.

Conclusions: Encouraging our student pharmacists to interact with the public and highlighting the capabilities of pharmacists will impact public perception of the profession. Survey data from those impacted by UCSOP students would be most ideal to measure the impact of activities and will be the focus of a future research activity to better inform UCSOP of their impact.

BACKGROUND

- Over the last several decades, the pharmacy profession has evolved from technical dispensing roles to clinical patient-centered services.¹
- Patients may be unaware of pharmacists' abilities, and thus have low expectations.¹
- When patients see pharmacists as healthcare providers, they are more likely to participate in cognitive services such as MTM, medication optimization, etc.²
- Advocacy, in its most basic form, is promotion of your skills and education. By promoting new skills and patient services, pharmacists find themselves responsible for advocacy at the patient level.¹
- Rather than relying solely on pharmacy professional organizations to advocate for change, pharmacists must promote clinical patient-centered services to patients and other health care professionals.¹
- Future pharmacists must be prepared as citizen leaders to execute the vision that pharmacy has articulated. To prepare them, essential components of pharmacy education must include a deliberate thread of co-curricular courses and activities throughout the curriculum.³
- Students from UCSOP gained valuable experience planning and leading the promotion of the profession and their clinical skills to patients through four primary events in the past year.

METHODS

- The project was submitted and determined exempt by the University of Charleston's Institutional Review Board.
- UCSOP's co-curricular program uses a badging system to track student activities and impact. The Advocacy badge is one of six that must be earned and requires each student to participate in three activities such as those listed below.
- Each activity is planned and led by student pharmacists to allow them to gain the skills and experience needed to be effective advocates as pharmacists.
- UCSOP participates in the Script Your Future competition (see sidebar), and the student-led activities for 2022-2023 included:
 - Save a Life Day:** An annual day of naloxone advocacy and substance use disorder (SUD) awareness. Student pharmacists and faculty of UCSOP travel to various communities in West Virginia to dispense, counsel, and advocate for the use of naloxone.
 - West Virginia Rural Health Day:** An opportunity for pharmacy students to meet and educate lawmakers, healthcare professionals, and Capitol guests on the negative environmental impacts of medication disposal. Guests also were able to take part in an interactive Kahoot!® quiz testing their pharmacy knowledge (see sample question in photo gallery).
 - West Virginia Pharmacy Day at the Capitol:** From discussions with legislators on pertinent pharmacy bills to point of care testing and education opportunities for Capitol guests, Pharmacy Day at the Capitol allows UCSOP students to experience firsthand the legislative process as well as demonstrate their clinical and practical skills to those who govern our state.
 - Out of the Darkness Walk:** An event focused on suicide prevention and mental health awareness in the community. UCSOP collaborated with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention to provide resources, advocate to decrease disease stigma, and provide participants the opportunity to walk together and share memories of loved ones lost to suicide.

PHOTO & QUOTE GALLERY

Regarding Pharmacy Day at the Capitol:

"The most altruistic form of patient care comes through advocacy. In a single day, UCSOP students took the initiative to positively impact 1.7 million West Virginia Patients that they will never see."

Dr. Matt Rafa



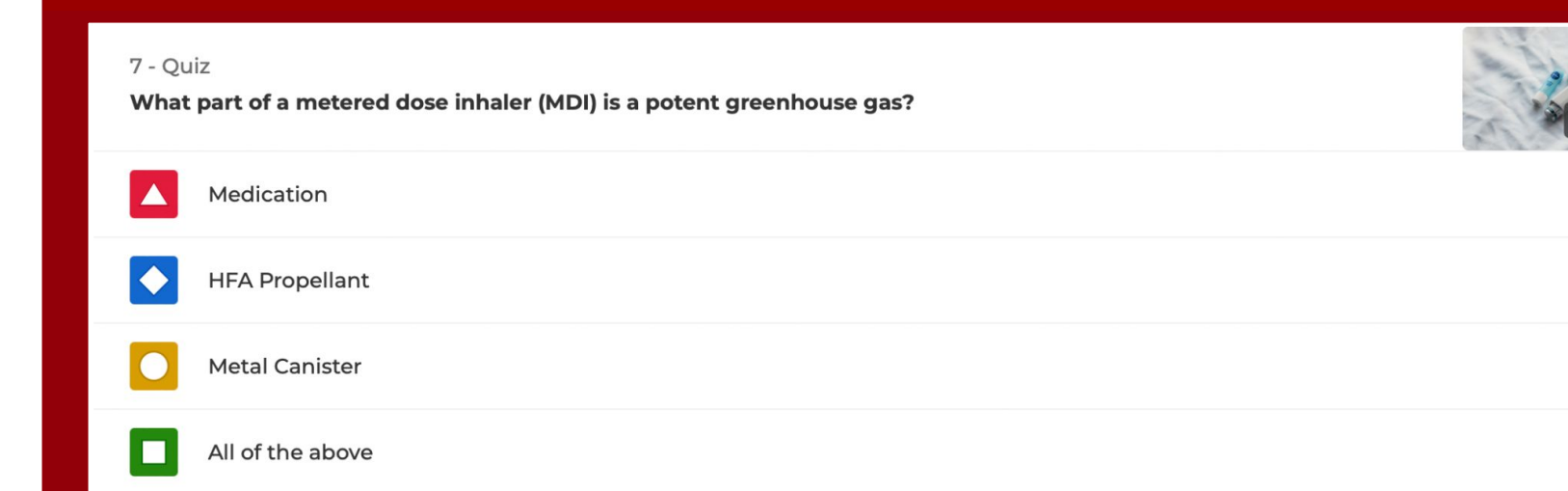
Regarding West Virginia Rural Health Day:

"UCSOP students promoted the role of pharmacists in rural health by educating multiple healthcare professionals as well as state representatives during WV Rural Health Day at the Capitol."

Dr. Kimberly Ballard



Sample Kahoot!® quiz question used at WVRHD



Regarding Save A Life Day:

"The UCSOP has been a pillar of Save a Life Day since the beginning. Dr. Acree makes miracles by making sure there's enough naloxone to go around the state. UCSOP students help to backstop events as volunteers and friendly faces. Now a dozen Appalachian states are joining Save a Life Day 2023 -- thanks to the seeds and sparks of UCSOP."

Mr. Joe Solomon



Regarding Out of the Darkness Walk:

"Suicide is the 2nd cause of death in those aged 10-34 in WV. I am thankful for UCSOP for bringing the subject of suicide to the forefront and creating a culture that's smarter about mental health."

Mrs. Amanda Farley



RESULTS

- Events reached over 650 members of the public and involved participation from 90 pharmacy students and faculty.
- UCSOP representatives participated in two state advocacy days.
- Support of Save A Life day showed value and encouraged expansion to 12 states in 2023.⁴
- Events led to 2022-23 National Script Your Future Campaign Interprofessional Award.⁵

Event	Student/Faculty Participants	Number Reached
Save a Life Day	14	500
West Virginia Rural Health Day	25	75
West Virginia Pharmacy Day at the Capitol	25	60
Out of the Darkness Walk	26	34
Overall	90	669

CONCLUSIONS

"The University of Charleston School of Pharmacy (UCSOP) took a broad approach to interprofessional collaboration and included students studying political science and public health. These students were onsite during the West Virginia Rural Health Day and WV Pharmacy Day at the Capitol events. Political Science students were able to give advice to pharmacy students on presenting material and information to legislators and state leaders. Students focused efforts on increasing community influence around the importance of healthy lifestyles, medication adherence, and the confidence in vaccines. To broaden the effort further, the University of Charleston Nursing Program, University of Charleston Athletic Trainers and Exercise Undergraduates, along with various undergraduate students who could share knowledge on health topics participated in various events. In addition to UC associates, the team collaborated with several community partners, such as the West Virginia Pharmacists Association, West Virginia Rural Health Association, West Virginia Collegiate Recovery Network, American Foundation for Suicide Awareness, The American Heart Association, Mt. Olivet Baptist Church, and West Virginia local and state representatives. In working with these organizations, the team was able to broaden the number of community members influenced by its campaign efforts."

- National Consumer League⁵
May 16th, 2023



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