



**Advanced Strategy Forum
with
Pharmacy Deans and Chain Community
Pharmacy Executives**

Final Report

Supported by



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The NACDS Foundation is grateful to sanofi-aventis for their generous contribution which made this Advanced Strategy Forum and subsequent report possible.



The NACDS Foundation greatly appreciates the participation and valuable input provided during the Advanced Strategy Forum by chain community pharmacy executives and pharmacy school deans from the following organizations:

Ahold USA
Albertsons, Inc.
Kerr Drug, Inc.
Rite Aid Corporation
Ukrop's Super Markets, Inc.
Walgreen Co.

Ohio Northern University Raabe College of Pharmacy
Oregon State University College of Pharmacy
University of Illinois at Chicago College of Pharmacy
University of New Mexico College of Pharmacy
University of the Pacific Thomas J. Long School of Pharmacy and Health Sciences
University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy
University of Southern California School of Pharmacy
Wayne State University Eugene Applebaum College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	5
Methodology	5
Session Participants	5
The Advanced Strategy Lab®	5
Detailed Findings	7
Issues Affecting the Future of Chain Community Pharmacy	7
Issues Affecting the Future of Pharmacy Education	9
Pharmacy School Applicant Pool	11
Characteristics and Qualities	11
Prior Degrees	11
Underrepresented Minority Students	12
Preparing Future Pharmacy Practitioners	13
Involvement on the Curriculum Committee	13
Business and Interpersonal Skills	13
Cultural Competence	14
Advanced Practice Experiences	15
Adequate Supply/Training of Preceptors	15
Availability of Advanced Practice Sites	15
Support for Preceptors	16
Community Pharmacy Faculty Development	18
Perceptions of Chain Community Pharmacy	19
Graduates' Perceptions	19
Student Perceptions of Clinical Services	20
Pharmacy Faculty Perceptions	20
Promoting Positive Perceptions	21
Pharmacy School and Chain Community Pharmacy Collaborative Initiatives	22
Medication Therapy Management Services	23
Development of Effective Practice Models	24
Legislative and Government Affairs	25
Conclusion	25

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On February 22, 2006, the NACDS Foundation convened a group of pharmacy deans and chain community pharmacy executives to interact utilizing Harris Interactive's Advanced Strategy Lab® (ASL®), a computer-based electronic brainstorming tool. The goal of the forum was to discuss ways the two groups can work in partnership to better prepare students for the changing community pharmacy landscape. During the forum, participants explored methods to enhance pharmacy faculty's understanding of the chain community pharmacy environment and opportunities for pharmacy graduates in the community pharmacy practice setting and examined ways chain community pharmacy can expand its efforts to collaborate with pharmacy schools to prepare future practitioners.

Preparing Future Community Pharmacy Practitioners

The pharmacy deans and chain executives explored areas of mutual interest related to the preparation of future community pharmacy practitioners. Both groups agree that chain community pharmacy involvement in the development of pharmacy school curricula and the selection of applicants into pharmacy schools was essential. Many pharmacy deans reported on the importance of having community pharmacy representation on the curriculum committee as well as incorporating chain community pharmacy practitioners into class lectures, especially management courses.

When considering the criteria used to evaluate pharmacy school applicants, the dialogue focused on innate characteristics and abilities. Beyond academic performance, the group identified communication skills, followed by management/leadership skills and cultural competence as the most important characteristics and abilities necessary to be a successful future chain community pharmacy practitioner.

Considering the education and training of future community pharmacists, quality advanced practice sites with well-trained preceptors and community pharmacy faculty were identified as essential. Both the pharmacy deans and chain executives agreed that there is a strong need for additional training to prepare preceptors. A national preceptor training program was discussed as a solution so long as the program allows for flexibility to meet local, community-based needs.

Just as deans are challenged to find community pharmacy sites that provide patient-focused learning opportunities versus dispensing/fulfillment duties, the pharmacy executives expressed several challenges to providing these patient-focused sites, including limited resources and a sustainable financial model to support innovative patient care services. All agreed there is significant value in employing community pharmacy faculty, who have first-hand experience with implementing and delivering patient care services in traditional community pharmacies.

Bridging the Gap... Collaboration Is Key to Success

Participants saw collaborative engagements among chain community pharmacy, pharmacy academia and pharmacy associations as vital to successfully communicating a consistent and coordinated view of the value of community pharmacy-based patient care services to key stakeholders, including the public, policy makers, and even pharmacy students.

Many participants noted that pharmacy graduates' perception of chains providing limited opportunities for patient care services was changing as chains expand their service offerings, such as medication therapy management, and students themselves serve as catalysts for change by bringing their clinical knowledge and skills into the practice setting. However, there was no dispute overall that the current perception of the chain community pharmacy environment presents challenges for both academia and community pharmacy.

When asked what initiatives chains and colleges could undertake to help promote a more positive perception of chain community pharmacy as a career option, potential actions focused on broadening the public perception of pharmacists so students can envision using all of their clinical skills in patient care environments and enhancing the public's perception of pharmacists, in general, so that students make a more immediate link between the profession and the value it brings to the community.

Current, prevailing perceptions may have a negative effect on the profession as well as the chain community pharmacy industry. By decreasing the importance placed on the pharmacist's role in the health care system, negative perceptions may lead to a diminished ability of the industry to rally public support and lobbying resources, and also prohibit attracting the kind of talent into the industry that can help facilitate positive change.

In a discussion of what pharmacy schools and chain pharmacies could do to educate their students and alumni and pharmacists to help facilitate positive change, the emphasis was placed on providing relevant information that translates into an understanding of how legislative actions impact them on a professional level and encouraging their active participation in local, state and federal levels. All participants stressed the need for all groups to communicate and deliver the same message, with mutual agreement, to avoid working at cross purposes.

Conclusion

The ASF participants agreed that existing collaborative programs should be expanded and new opportunities should be explored to enhance the working relationship between chain community pharmacy and pharmacy education to effectively communicate the value of community pharmacy to the public, policy makers, and pharmacy students. The overall benefits of these collaborative efforts include improving patient care services in the community pharmacy practice setting and empowering pharmacy students to be agents of change.

INTRODUCTION

Continuing changes in health care require serious discussion on how to prepare pharmacy students for the future of community pharmacy practice and how chain pharmacies and academia can collaborate to best train and educate these students.

The NACDS Foundation conducted an Advanced Strategy Forum (ASF) bringing together chain executives and pharmacy school deans. The goal of the forum was to discuss ways the two groups can work in partnership to better prepare students for the changing community pharmacy landscape. During the ASF, participants explored methods to enhance pharmacy faculty's understanding of the chain community pharmacy environment and opportunities for pharmacy graduates in the community pharmacy practice setting and examined ways chain community pharmacy can expand its efforts to collaborate with pharmacy schools to prepare future practitioners.

The Advanced Strategy Forum gave these key decision-makers the opportunity to exchange ideas and thoughts about pharmacy education and chain community pharmacy practice. As a result of this exchange, participants were able to identify areas of common interest and gain a better understanding of the diverse challenges facing the pharmacy profession.

METHODOLOGY

For several years, NACDS and the NACDS Foundation have used the Advanced Strategy Forum to explore pre-identified topics with various segments of the chain drug industry. This is an especially useful technique for collecting feedback on subjects where you desire a frank and open exchange.

Session Participants

The NACDS Foundation convened a select group of 14 individuals from pharmacy academia and chain community pharmacy for a one-time Advanced Strategy Forum (ASF) held on February 22, 2006, in Alexandria, Virginia. Specifically, participants included:

- Chain pharmacy executives, including those with responsibilities for Pharmacy Operations, Recruiting, Government/Regulatory Affairs and Clinical Services, from a cross section of both regional and national chains, representing traditional, supermarket, and mass merchant pharmacies
- U.S. colleges and schools of pharmacy deans representing both public and private institutions

The Advanced Strategy Lab®

Harris Interactive's Advanced Strategy Lab® (ASL®) is a qualitative research tool utilizing a methodology that not only explores a problem, but also assists in designing an implementation plan to move toward solutions. Thereby, it serves as a "total process" research tool and is an efficient resource for strategic guidance.

The ASL® is a mobile computer lab featuring GroupSystems software to facilitate a participatory group discussion and brainstorming session. In the Advanced Strategy Forum, the facilitator leads participants through "online" research questions and applications. Participants respond to questions posed by the facilitator and enter their responses into their own computer. All responses are anonymous to ensure confidentiality and freethinking within a guided format. Additionally, the facilitator engages participants in active dialogue and discussion of key findings.

Each forum is thoughtfully and carefully planned in advance to maximize the information collected and discussed. Typically, discussion topics and questions addressing the targeted areas are solicited in advance from session participants.

The topic areas selected for the *Advanced Strategy Forum with Pharmacy Deans and Chain Community Pharmacy Executives* included the following:

- Pharmacy School Applicant Pool
- Pharmacy School Curriculum
- Introductory and Advanced Practice Experiences
- Preceptors
- Faculty Development
- Provision of Clinical Services in Community Pharmacy
- Leadership and Professionalism
- Legislative/Government Affairs

Time in each area was limited, so that all areas were addressed. Responses by participants can best be described as those that were top of mind and may not necessarily reflect the universe of responses possible should the group have been expanded or another group of individuals had participated.

The *Advanced Strategy Forum with Pharmacy Deans and Chain Pharmacy Executives* utilized this unique technology to rigorously review the changing landscape of community pharmacy and strategize how pharmacy academia and chain community pharmacy can work together to better prepare students for the future of community pharmacy practice. This report includes highlights of the various topics addressed during the ASF. Although individual responses remain anonymous, where possible, illustrative statements are labeled as provided by a chain executive or pharmacy dean.

DETAILED FINDINGS

Issues Affecting the Future of Chain Community Pharmacy

To familiarize the participants with the use of the technology, two opening questions were asked to list issues affecting the future of chain community pharmacy and issues affecting the future of pharmacy education. A discussion of the issues affecting the future of chain community pharmacy are reported in this section while the discussion of the issues affecting the future of pharmacy education appear in the next section of this report.

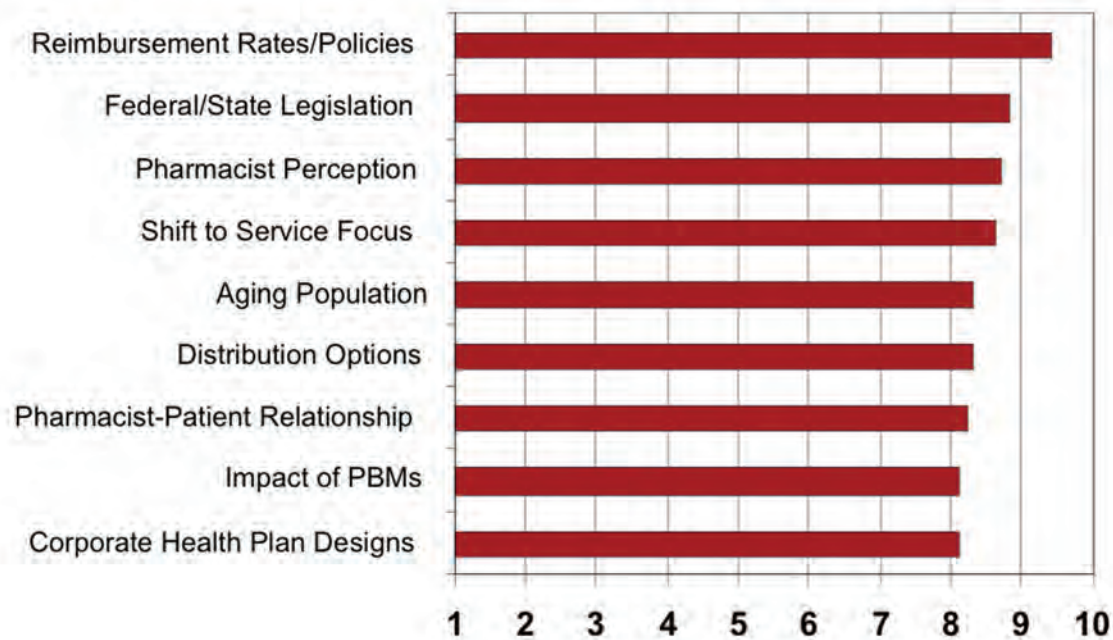
There are numerous top-of-mind issues affecting the future of chain community pharmacies cited by chain executives and deans. Participants were concerned with the impact of prescription benefit managers (PBMs), legislation and policies regarding reimbursement rates and the effect of health plan decisions by corporate America. Additionally, some participants were concerned with the demand on the health care system to care for an aging population and the uninsured, along with the impact of increasing costs for prescription medications.

Others cited issues impacting chain community pharmacies/pharmacists, including:

- Perception of pharmacists and the relationship between the pharmacist and patient
- Cultural competency relating to serving diverse patient populations
- Anticipated continuance of the pharmacist shortage
- Shift from product to service focus
- Emergence of mail order pharmacy and other points of distribution
- Consolidation of chain pharmacy companies and payors

When asked to prioritize these areas (by rating them on a scale of 1 to 10 where 10 is the most important), the impact of reductions in reimbursement to chain pharmacies and the legislation or policies driving those reductions were seen as being the most important issues affecting the future of chain pharmacies. The perception of pharmacists by the public and the shift from product to a service focus were rated overall as the next most important, followed by an aging population, distribution options, the pharmacist-patient relationship, the impact of PBMs and corporate health plan designs.

Most Important Issues Affecting Future of Chain Pharmacies



Key Terms in Chart (as determined on-site by the Advanced Strategy Lab® personnel using responses gathered from open-ended questions asked of participants):

Reimbursement Rates/Policies: Declining margins in prescriptions paid for by a third party and recent changes in Medicare and Medicaid.

Federal/State Legislation: Federal and state government activities impacting reimbursement to community pharmacy for prescription drugs and pharmacy services.

Pharmacist Perception: Perception of community pharmacists by the general public, public and private payers and policy-makers.

Shift to Service Focus: Ongoing change by community pharmacy from a product focus to a service focus.

Aging Population: Elderly Americans are among the greatest utilizers of prescription drugs and pharmacy services.

Distribution Options: Sources for prescription drugs other than brick and mortar community pharmacies.

Pharmacist-Patient Relationship: Value and trust patients have in their relationships with pharmacists.

Impact of PBMs: Increasing role of PBMs and their impact on community pharmacy.

Corporate Health Plan Designs: Current trends in benefit design by major employers.

Issues Affecting the Future of Pharmacy Education

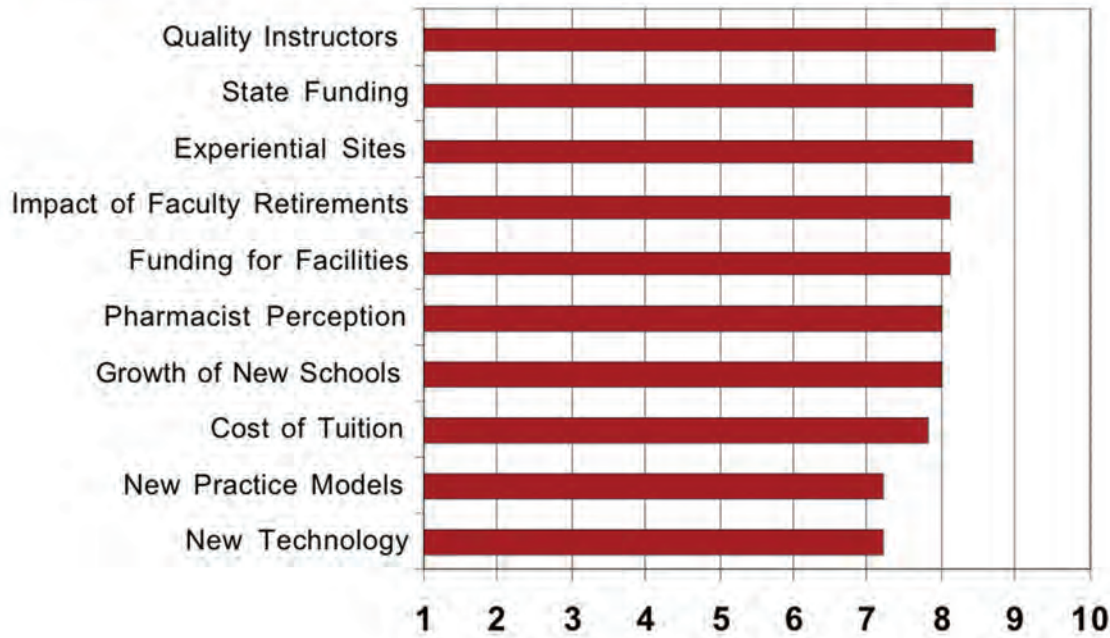
Similar to the exercise asking participants to identify issues key to the future of chain community pharmacy, session participants were also asked to explore issues impacting the future of pharmacy education. The three most frequently mentioned issues were the financing of quality education, the faculty shortage and subsequent competition for hiring faculty, and the perception of the value of the pharmacist.

Specifically in the area of finance, participants mentioned the lack of public funding due to state budget constraints as well as the need to increase faculty salaries so that pharmacy schools are able to compete for quality faculty with colleges of medicine, hospitals and the industry. Additionally, several session participants expressed concern over the rising cost of a pharmacy education. One participant questioned students' level of acceptance for the increasing rate of pharmacy school tuition before deciding to turn to other health care professions.

Participants were also concerned about the composition of the pharmacy workforce, specifically, how to increase the number of male and Hispanic applicants and graduates. There was also uncertainty as to the existence of future leadership positions among faculty once the current generation of leaders retires.

When asked to prioritize these areas (by rating them on a 1 to 10 scale where 10 is the most important), the availability of quality instructors, the level of state funding and availability of experiential learning sites emerged as the top three. The impact of faculty retirements and funding for facilities were rated overall as the next most important, followed by the perception of the pharmacist, growth of new pharmacy schools, cost of tuition, new practice models, and new technology.

Most Important Issues Affecting Future of Pharmacy Education



Key Terms in Chart (as determined on-site by the Advanced Strategy Lab® personnel using responses gathered from open-ended questions asked of participants):

Quality Instructors: Shortage of quality instructors and competition with the pharmaceutical industry for high quality faculty in the basic sciences. Pharmacy faculty salaries are not competitive in the marketplace.

State Funding: Lack of public funding for higher education due to state budget constraints.

Experiential Sites: Growing competition between pharmacy schools for quality clerkship sites and quantity and quality of clinical education practice sites.

Impact of Faculty Retirements: Pending retirements of many faculty and concern about source of new leaders as baby boomers retire from leadership positions within the schools.

Funding for Facilities: Need for funds to upgrade infrastructure.

Pharmacist Perception: Public (including legislature, university administration) perception of pharmacy as a profession.

Growth of New Schools: Competition for limited resources, including faculty.

Cost of Tuition: Affordability of a pharmacy education.

New Practice Models: Lack of research on community practice and models of care as changes in practice influence the skills needed by future practitioners.

New Technology: Staying abreast of rapidly changing technology available for use in the community pharmacy practice setting and how to prepare students.

Pharmacy School Applicant Pool

The pharmacy school applicant pool continues to remain very important to the future of the pharmacy profession, as it serves as the pipeline of future practitioners. Historically, the demographic trends reported most often to describe the applicant pool included gender, ethnicity and in-state vs. out of state residency. Emerging demographics, such as students with prior degrees, are of increasing interest to all pharmacy stakeholders. The pharmacy deans and chain community pharmacy executives explored characteristics and qualities of applicants, applicants' prior degree status and pharmacy's ability to attract underrepresented minority students.

Characteristics and Qualities

Participants were asked a series of questions about the pharmacy school applicant pool relating to characteristics and innate qualities essential for future practitioners, assessment of non-academic skills of applicants and prior degrees. Additionally, the group explored what could be done to encourage a more ethnically diverse applicant pool.

When asked what characteristics and innate qualities are essential for future chain community pharmacy practitioners beyond academic performance, communication skills topped the list followed by management/leadership skills and cultural competence. Responses were similar for both the chain executives and the pharmacy deans. Other characteristics and qualities listed included:

- Empathy/compassion
- Extroverted
- Being a team player
- Willingness to embrace new technology
- Desire to be a caring health care professional

With the adoption in 2006 of the revised accreditation standards for pharmacy education by the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE), all pharmacy schools will be required to include applicant interviews as part of the admissions process. Most participants agreed that there is a need to involve chain community pharmacists in the interview process to help assess the applicants. As a means of contributing to the interview process, several chain community pharmacy executives commented that they already undertake a behavioral assessment during their recruitment of employees. The group discussed the application of this behavioral assessment to pharmacy school applicant interviews.

Prior Degrees

According to data from the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy, 38.9% of applicants in the 2003-2004 applicant pool had a baccalaureate, masters, or Ph.D. degree. Participants were asked what implications this may have for pharmacy education and the profession, as well as how a growing trend of students with prior degrees might impact the pharmacy workforce.

The impact of pharmacy student applicants possessing prior educational degrees (bachelors, masters, Ph.D.) was perceived as a positive by most participants, as it will lead to a more mature and well-rounded workforce. Some participants also noted that these types of applicants will have higher expectations of the profession and may be more advanced in interacting with people.

The positive views of applicants with prior degrees are illustrated below:

These are more mature students who are likely to be highly motivated to succeed in pharmacy.

The students come with a richer background that enhances the educational process. This will result in having pharmacists with broader frames of reference who should be better able to work with a wide array of patients/clients.

However, some participants expressed concern over the real or perceived influence that prior degree status exerts on the application process. Some participants felt it should not influence candidate admission and should be weighted equally with other admissions criteria. Other participants expressed they place a high value on prior degree status.

Finally one participant expressed concern, *Requiring prior degrees (either outright or implicitly) would cause some potential pharmacy graduates to choose a different profession and may help worsen a pharmacist shortage in certain areas.*

Underrepresented Minority Students

In terms of attracting underrepresented minority students to the pharmacy profession, scholarships are obviously a key ingredient to success. Several participants reported that pharmacy is losing some minority students to medicine and that pharmacy schools need to be financially competitive with other professions in terms of scholarships and loans.

Many participants also noted the need to reach out to students early in their development, perhaps in the form of mentoring programs, to help change their image of the profession. Some participants indicated that chains and schools are already partnering to offer outreach programs. Participants suggested targeting students as early as grade school.

These comments illustrate actions to attract underrepresented minority students to pharmacy school:

Financial support and marketing to raise awareness of pharmacy as a profession to these ethnic groups may assist in this challenge.

Recruit students from inner city high schools or better yet recruit students from the inner city grade schools. Set up mentoring programs for pharmacy students to work with grade school age children on math and science. This mentorship can provide an avenue of recruitment.

We are still looking for a good way to do this. We are doing more recruitment at schools with large underrepresented populations and through cultural centers on campus. Scholarship support is a key, but sorely lacking.

Preparing Future Pharmacy Practitioners

Dynamic changes in the delivery of health care drive the importance of collaboration and communication among all stakeholders in pharmacy to communicate the role and valuable contributions of pharmacists to improving patient care. The forum participants explored ways that chain community pharmacy can work with pharmacy academia through involvement on the curriculum committee and discussed the importance of pharmacy graduates having business and interpersonal skills. The group also described the growing need to infuse cultural competence throughout the curriculum.

Involvement on the Curriculum Committee

In order for colleges and schools of pharmacy to prepare pharmacy students to serve as future pharmacy practitioners, both the pharmacy deans and the chain community pharmacy executives agreed they need to work together. Roughly half of the participants indicated these collaborative discussions are taking place on curriculum committees or other advisory boards/councils. Most agreed there is no need to develop additional committees or forums. Both groups acknowledged the heavy reliance of pharmacy schools upon practitioner input with a focus on local, community-based pharmacists, who can have a role in management classes as guest lecturers.

The following illustrate the role chain community pharmacy can play in the development of pharmacy school curricula:

Community pharmacists need to have a role in curriculum development to ensure the proper preparedness of our future pharmacists. [Chain executive]

Pharmacy practice can play an essential role in not only being content experts in various areas, but most importantly they can forecast skills needed five years from now. [Dean]

Business and Interpersonal Skills

When asked about the opportunities that exist for students to learn the business and interpersonal skills necessary to be successful in community pharmacy, participants largely agreed the most helpful experiences are those that bring the students face-to-face with real-world situations. These experiences might be in the form of internships/clerkships, experiential training, or courses “with real-life applications,” such as pharmaceutical care practice labs. Some participants also mentioned classes that expose students to business and management practices, as well as student employment in community pharmacies.

To prepare students with skills they will need in community pharmacy, including team building, communication and interpersonal relations, the pharmacy school deans explained that many colleges offer courses focusing on team learning and interaction through group presentations and exercises. These activities are integrated throughout the curriculum. In addition, the chain community pharmacy executives indicated that many chain companies offer training programs and other professional development opportunities, such as mentoring programs, to enhance these important pharmacist skills.

Patient focused opportunities center around team building. There are best practice sites available to learn what works and does not work. [Chain executive]

However, these training programs are not offered consistently across the profession. While many colleges and chains offer courses or training to increase students' skills during didactic courses, rotations or internships, some participants suggested there is need for more than what is currently offered. A chain pharmacy executive suggested more mentoring by experienced practicing pharmacists as an example of ways that chain community pharmacy companies can enhance business and personal skills of pharmacy students and recent pharmacy graduates.

Cultural Competence

To better prepare pharmacy graduates to serve diverse patient populations, the participants engaged in an electronic dialogue to identify ways to infuse cultural competence throughout the curriculum. Areas where participants view opportunities for chains and schools to work together to increase cultural competence in the pharmacy school curriculum include internships and rotations in culturally diverse sites, requiring students take a foreign language course and investing in culturally competent faculty or mentors. During this exchange, all agreed that language competence does not equate to cultural competence and being culturally competent is a personal skill that is essential to be a successful patient-focused pharmacist.

These thoughts are reflected in the comments below:

Understanding the values important in the different cultures and ability to deal with language barriers is valuable. [Chain executive]

Sensitivity training and cultural differences should be used within all classes to address this issue. [Dean]

Advanced Practice Experiences

Participants articulated several challenges schools and chain community pharmacies face in providing advanced practice experiences. These challenges tended to cluster around two main areas: adequate supply/training of preceptors and the lack of available sites and opportunities to facilitate these experiences.

Adequate Supply/Training of Preceptors

Both the chain executives and pharmacy deans agreed that there is a strong need for qualified preceptors and that additional training to prepare preceptors is needed. Several chain executives noted: 1) the reluctance of some practitioners to serve as preceptors because they feel less academically astute than the students that they precept, e.g., some baccalaureate degree pharmacists are not comfortable serving as preceptors for advanced practice rotations; and 2) recent Pharm.D. graduates are not volunteering to become advanced practice experience preceptors.

It is necessary to have a chain community pharmacy manager who embraces teaching and innovation and is excited about patient care. These folks can make these rotations possible and exciting for students. [Dean]

Availability of Advanced Practice Sites

Just as the pharmacy deans are challenged to find community pharmacy sites that provide patient-focused learning opportunities vs. dispensing/fulfillment duties, the pharmacy executives expressed several challenges to providing these patient-focused sites. These challenges include the lack of an agreed upon definition of “Advanced Practice Experience,” limited resources, limited availability of enough locations offering clinical services and the lack of a financial model to support innovative services.

A challenge is the different schedule of weeks and materials required by each school. There is a need for common materials and for the schedule of rotations to be the same. [Chain executive]

The main components of an Advanced Practice Experience in community pharmacy that are currently being addressed and emphasized are counseling and patient care services, such as disease management, medication therapy management, health screenings and provision of immunizations. Although management training was mentioned as being currently addressed, some pharmacy deans felt chains should be more focused on clinical models rather than business applications.

When asked to describe what components should be the focus of an Advanced Practice Experience, participants restated the emphasis on patient care services, such as management of chronic conditions and medication therapy management. Additionally, some pharmacy deans indicated the need to reach out to the local communities to understand the needs of patients they serve and to position community pharmacy as an integral part of the community.

These statements reflect actions and considerations for the development of advanced practice experiences:

Sites should be able to care for patients, especially those with chronic diseases and have the resources and knowledge to care for these patients. [Dean]

Schools could use advanced practice sites to develop community-based clinical patient programs as both a training tool and enhancement in community practice. [Chain executive]

Support for Preceptors

Given the important role that preceptors play in the education and training of future pharmacy practitioners, the participants explored preceptor needs to enable them to provide quality practice experiences for pharmacy students.

Our chain partners have provided much needed assistance. They have promoted the identification and use of pharmacists, as preceptors, for Advanced Practice Experiences [Dean]

When considering the support currently provided to preceptors by the colleges and schools of pharmacy as well as their employers, support is primarily provided in the form of the following:

- Continuing pharmacy education to assist preceptors in maintaining their pharmacy license
- Preceptor training offered by colleges and schools of pharmacy and some chain community pharmacy companies
- Access to resources such as university libraries or online clinical databases
- Recognition of preceptors as faculty at the college/school of pharmacy

The following quote provides the best overall summary:

Preceptors should receive “*recognition by chains and the schools for the good work*” they do. [Dean]

In exploring what specific support should be provided by pharmacy schools and chain community pharmacy employers, the group focused on several key areas: time, recognition, and training. Realizing the demand placed upon chain community pharmacists in a dynamic setting where they are focused on meeting the needs of the general public as well as health care practitioners with whom they interact, representatives of the schools and chain pharmacies agreed that additional support for patient care services would be beneficial. There is also a greater need for the recognition of the contributions made by preceptors. For example, employers may consider incorporating the preceptor function into the pharmacist job description and formally evaluate their performance annually with a monetary reward for exceptional performance. Finally, despite the training that already exists, a need for more training was evident.

The following are responses by participants to the question of what support should be provided by chains or schools to preceptors:

Schools should provide assessment tools to preceptors in what should be taught and how to grade. [Dean]

Pharmacy practice sites should provide time and incentives for pharmacists to participate. Colleges should provide training for the preceptors and any on site shared faculty, if applicable. [Dean]

Time, training, support, and recognition should be provided. [Chain executive]

Employers should have the ability to provide staff when the preceptor pharmacist wants to go to training or meetings. [Chain executive]

Although education and training were indicated as a primary source of support for preceptors, there was strong agreement among the session participants that all, including the pharmacy schools and chain pharmacies, would benefit from the development of a national pharmacy preceptor training program. Given the recent focus by the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE), the accrediting body for pharmacy education, a national program may be an excellent opportunity for pharmacy schools and community pharmacy to work cooperatively to advance the profession. It was noted that a national program would need to be flexible so that preceptors can apply local community input and would need to give pharmacists a reason to participate.

These views are supported by the following comments from participants:

A national training program should be pursued to standardize the preceptor skills of pharmacists across the country. [Chain executive]

There should be a basic level of education that is needed, excellent idea. [Dean]

A national preceptor program should be pursued, but allow chains to make decisions based on what works for them, as most large chains have great preceptor training programs already in place. [Chain executive]

Community Pharmacy Faculty Development

Both pharmacy deans and chain community pharmacy executives believe there is significant value in employing faculty who have experience with implementing and delivering patient care services in traditional community pharmacies. On average, participants rated the value of this experience a 9 on a 10-point scale where 1 means “a very low level of value” and 10 means “a very high level of value.”

They should have work experience in a community pharmacy and continue to have some association with a community pharmacy.

When asked to describe the types of training or experience that faculty who teach community pharmacy practice should have as part of their background, the majority of participants indicated a strong need for faculty to have had actual work experience in a community pharmacy. One participant went so far as to say that they should have been *a pharmacy manager or owned a pharmacy for 5-10 years and also provided multiple types of service to their patients.* Alternatively, other attributes or characteristics, such as attitude, communication skills, knowledge about patient care and disease state management and cultural competence for the area in which they work, were also identified as important aspects of background experience.

To assist community pharmacy faculty to remain active in community pharmacy practice while maintaining their teaching, research and service responsibilities, participants offered the following suggestions:

- Provide financial support, such as paid faculty internships or part-time employment in a community pharmacy
- Encourage membership in state and/or national pharmacy associations, including providing time and monetary support to attend meetings/conferences
- Minimize their didactic, classroom teaching and maximize their clinical, practice teaching

Additional perspectives on community pharmacy faculty development include:

We can work with the colleges to provide mentoring to faculty by selecting our pharmacist and allowing the faculty to work with them in our stores. [Chain executive]

I do not think that in today's academic environment that a faculty member can any longer do all of this [teaching, research, service and practice pharmacy]. We must think of new [academic] models so that individuals can be practitioner/educators with scholarly activities or they can be educator/researchers.

Perceptions of Chain Community Pharmacy

The pharmacy deans and the chain community pharmacy executives explored various factors that shape perceptions of chain community pharmacy held by recent pharmacy graduates, students and pharmacy faculty. Participants also discussed ways to promote a positive perception of chain pharmacy as a career option.

Graduates' Perceptions

Participants began this discussion by commenting on how they believe graduating pharmacists view the chain community pharmacy environment. Pharmacy deans and chain community pharmacy executives expressed similar viewpoints. Both groups acknowledged pharmacy graduates possess both positive and negative views of chain community pharmacy.

The deans and chain executives agree that many pharmacy graduates have positive views of the chain community pharmacy practice setting that specifically include compensation, in terms of salary and benefits, and flexibility. The chain environment is particularly attractive to those interested in flexible schedules. Pharmacy graduates are also beginning to see more opportunities for patient care services that permit them to use the skills and knowledge earned in school.

Session participants concurred that pharmacy graduates continue to see the burden of third party administration, high prescription volumes, and little patient interaction as obstacles to working in the chain community pharmacy setting. Although some viewed that there were opportunities for direct patient care activities, others see the pharmacy students' perceptions of the chain community pharmacy setting as an environment where many of the skills a Doctor of Pharmacy graduate possesses cannot be utilized. These graduates are likely to pursue other practice settings or residency programs upon graduation.

The following comments reflect additional thoughts regarding pharmacy graduates' views of the chain community pharmacy environment:

I believe graduating pharmacists still primarily view chain as an environment where there is little patient interaction and their role is to fill prescriptions as quickly as possible. This has changed somewhat over the last five years as graduates recognize the opportunities to provide true clinical services in the community, but for the most part the stigma of chain community pharmacy still exists. [Chain executive]

Graduating pharmacists view community practice settings as being convenient from a work environment perspective. Flexible hours allow women to juggle a career and motherhood. Many view these settings as less stimulating because there is minimal opportunity to assess and counsel patients. Many of the skills of Pharm.D. graduates cannot be utilized in many community settings. [Dean]

Community pharmacy is at a critical juncture to truly show the value pharmacists bring to the health care environment. With Medicare Part D and the opportunity to provide medication therapy management services, as well as the cost of health care increasing exponentially, pharmacists can play a critical role to help patients with more cost effective therapies, as well as better compliance and adherence with their drugs. However, pharmacy grads today have to recognize this occurs in an outpatient environment where they have to be flexible and innovative to make this happen. [Chain executive]

Student Perceptions of Clinical Services

In community pharmacy today, there appears to be a gap between student perceptions of pharmacist opportunity to provide clinical services and the clinical services actually provided. When asked about this phenomenon and how the gap can be bridged, most participants admit that the gap exists and attribute it largely to the lack of faculty experience at community pharmacies and an inconsistent offering of clinical services within community pharmacy.

Participants' suggestions on how to remedy the gap between reality and perception include:

- Establishing recognition of the various types of “clinical” services offered by community pharmacists and “that clinical services [actually] run the gamut between counseling and comprehensive medication therapy management.”
- Developing effective practice models that provide a return on investment. Currently, funding is solely based on sales of prescriptions. Reimbursement for services is key to the development of financially viable offerings.
- Educating those members of the pharmacy faculty who have not practiced community pharmacy and who were not trained as pharmacists.
- Influencing legislators at all levels of government. Chains and schools should work together to advocate for policies and legislation regarding fair and adequate reimbursement rates.
- Engaging students as catalysts for change by bringing their clinical knowledge and skills into the practice setting.

Students need to be trained to recognize opportunity and how to take advantage of it. Learning how to incorporate themselves truly into the community will help with this.

Pharmacy Faculty Perceptions

Most participants believe that faculty perceptions of chain pharmacy as a career are not predominantly positive, but there is recognition that this can change. Some pharmacy deans reported they are seeing this change already among pharmacy faculty. Participants noted negative faculty perceptions largely stem from the opinion that there are:

- Limited opportunities for patient care, such as disease state management, and patient interaction
- Minimal opportunities for career growth
- High rates of “burn out”
- Views that the chain setting is not as challenging and stimulating as other environments.

These views are illustrated in the following:

I do not think there is the level of respect that there should be...

Some faculty find it a career goal to speak out to students about what type of practice setting they should work in and where they should work. Faculty need to understand the influential position they are in.

There is evidence that the negative perceptions are changing as indicated by the following responses:

I feel my faculty are positive about practice within chain environments. They teach that one can practice in any setting. [Dean]

[It] really depends on the faculty, part of the country, etc. Some are anti-chain, but with the right education, they can be turned around. Many basic science faculty no longer come from a pharmacy background, so they seem to be more positive about the chain environment.

Promoting Positive Perceptions

Participants engaged in a brainstorming session to identify what chains and colleges of pharmacy could do to promote a positive perception of chain community pharmacy as a career option. These suggestions are categorized as follows:

- Increase pharmacy student exposure to pharmacy services delivered by community pharmacists
- Communicate about advancement opportunities within chain community pharmacy
- Elevate the stature of community pharmacy faculty within the academic setting

Select responses from participants indicate that chains and/or schools can do the following to promote a positive perception of chain community pharmacy:

Promote and train towards best practices. [Chain executive]

Colleges can work with the faculty who do not speak positively about chain community pharmacy to recognize the value chain community pharmacy practice has in our profession. [Chain executive]

Be critical of the current fulfillment process and change it. [Chain executive]

Promote pharmacy to the community. [Dean]

Participants were then given the task of identifying the most important action that chains, colleges and/or NACDS could undertake to help promote a more positive perception of chain community pharmacy as a career option. All of the actions suggested focused on broadening the perception of pharmacists, so that students can envision using all of their clinical skills in the chain community pharmacy environment, and enhancing the public's perception of pharmacists, in general, so that students make a more immediate link between the profession and the value it brings to the community.

These statements illustrate the “value” proposition for chain community pharmacy:

Allow graduates to use the entire array of skills they possess. This will result in patients having different experiences with pharmacists and changing their perceptions. It will change over time the public's perception of pharmacy. Pharmacists will be viewed as an integral area of the health care team. People will be attracted to the profession when they realize how fulfilling it can be. Pharmacists will have greater degrees of career satisfaction. [Dean]

Faculty and Deans should promote the opportunities that exist in chain community pharmacy and communicate that students are the important catalysts to bring about change in the profession. But, be realistic that change does not come easily or quickly. This is important to preserve the pharmacy profession. The public continues to view pharmacy as one of the most trusted professions and that perception comes from the community pharmacists, so students should feel proud to serve the public and not like they have settled for less of a professional. [Chain executive]

Pharmacy School and Chain Community Pharmacy Collaborative Initiatives

Participants were asked to cite collaborative initiatives they are involved in between chains and pharmacy schools. A diverse range of activities were listed, including:

- Community pharmacy residencies
- Scholarships
- Internships
- Preceptors
- Shared faculty
- Research
- Community pharmacy management courses
- Chain support for career days, White Coat ceremonies, and student attendance at professional meetings

The benefits of these programs were felt to extend to both chain pharmacies and students; chain pharmacies benefit by bringing in faculty research expertise and building relationships with potential future employees, while students gain exposure to the community pharmacy practice setting. These collaborations allow the chain and school to understand each other's challenges and objectives, and ultimately improves the quality of care available to patients.

Specific comments about the benefits of collaborative initiatives between pharmacy schools and chain community pharmacies include:

There needs to be an increased understanding by both chain executives and colleges about each other's objectives and challenges. A benefit to working collaboratively is the opportunity to experiment and evaluate outcomes of innovations. Introduce students to innovations in practice sites that they may not know exist. Successful projects bring better care to patients.

Benefits to the profession are the expanded professional opportunities for students and patient care. Benefits to our college include providing opportunities for our students to interact with patients in the community environment in a direct way and to engage our chain practitioners in the planning at the college. [Dean]

The shared faculty members interact with other faculty members in our pharmacy practice and pharmacy administration department to enable these individuals to learn more about what chain community pharmacy is really like. This interaction helps other faculty members to appreciate what chain pharmacies are doing. [Dean]

Relationships between schools and companies go a long way toward advancing the profession. Exposing students early in the curriculum to real world experiences better prepares them for the realities of pharmacy practice. [Retailer]

Medication Therapy Management Services

The next area that participants were asked to consider was medication therapy management services (MTMS), specifically the education or training programs that should be developed to assist staff pharmacists to transition to the provision of these services. Without some standard baseline definition of medication therapy management services across all health care, it is likely that training will be developed in response to what payors and health plans will require and pay for. Therefore, the need for MTMS training may vary by chain company or region.

Once a pharmacy has made the decision to offer MTMS, participants indicated the importance of training that should focus around chronic diseases with an emphasis on the following skills:

- Gathering a patient history
- Making clinical choices and assessing outcomes
- Communicating with patients and health care providers
- Implementing and collecting data at the store level
- Documenting actions

The need for MTMS training is illustrated by the following participant comments:

Training about communication skills and cultural diversity... not only for special communities but also for the elderly population... and education concerning chronic diseases that affect the particular population being served are needed.

Pharmacists need brief, focused training on writing drug plans and evaluating a patient's drug therapy, as well as training and mentoring students.

Programs teaching appropriate assessment and documentation skills are needed.

Learning to sit in a room with a patient and ask open-ended questions to understand the needs of the patients. There should be some emphasis on clinical skills, but a residency is not needed. Having [a resource or clinical pharmacy specialist available to pharmacy practitioners to assist in managing] complex therapies for which they do not have expertise is critical.

Development of Effective Practice Models

There is strong agreement among participants that new and effective practice models within community pharmacy can be greatly influenced by collaboration among faculty and the chain practice sites. Participants indicated the need to document successful business models in order to achieve a positive return on investment. Faculty members were viewed as valuable partners in this effort.

These collaborative efforts were described by participants as:

Such programs must be designed with an eye to the bottom line. Nice ideas are great, but successful programs are self-funding and achieve positive, measurable returns.

Dedicated faculty who practice in community environments and whose research is to establish and evaluate new practice models can serve as partners with chain community pharmacy. The evaluation must include an economic assessment and patient outcome assessment and must be economically viable.

Shared positions or collaborations involving faculty can result in developing innovative models for community practice. Allow faculty to work with community pharmacists on clinical research projects to identify best practices and determine most effective ways to intervene with patients.

In addition to the need for financial support of effective practice models, the group also recognized the need to work together to increase consumer awareness of community pharmacy-based services. At the top of the list of suggestions to increase consumer awareness was the need for public education about the value of pharmacy services and community outreach.

Have the public understand the concept of pharmacy as a place for total health care, not just a [place to pick up a] prescription. [Chain executive]

Legislative and Government Affairs

To close the session, participants were asked a series of questions about what chains could do to educate their pharmacists about legislative issues, what colleges could do to educate their students and alumni about legislative issues, and how chains and colleges could collaborate to raise the voice of community pharmacy to state, local and national representatives.

In terms of equipping and motivating the chain pharmacist workforce, the emphasis was placed on providing them with relevant information, and then encouraging their participation in regulatory matters. Local and state pharmacy associations were identified as potential partners in mobilizing pharmacists. A key ingredient is regularly communicating all of the areas impacting the industry and potential outcomes. Pharmacists need to understand the importance of their involvement as noted by one participant, “The future of their profession is at stake.”

... Involvement should be stressed as part of their [pharmacists] professional responsibility...

... Need for the pharmacists to understand how legislation impacts their work environment and that they need to participate.

As with pharmacists, participants stressed educating and communicating what is at stake with students and alumni in personally relevant ways. A few of the ideas mentioned were continuing education programs, meetings with legislators, and teaching courses on legislative affairs and the importance of being politically active. To bring students face-to-face with the issues at hand, several participants suggested having students participate in legislative days and contact their representatives.

Get them [pharmacy students and alumni] to realize that it affects their viability as well as their school's future growth, let alone survival.

... Schools should have pharmacist alumni, who are legislators or elected officials, talk to students about their ability to influence the [future of] the profession.

Many collaborative efforts that chains and colleges could engage in were discussed. Many involved joint lobbying/legislative days and public relations efforts. But regardless of the specific action, all participants stressed the need for all groups to communicate and be on the same page in terms of their point-of-view on issues to avoid working at cross purposes. Several pharmacy deans indicated that public universities may have limitations on lobbying.

*Have programs where the legislators themselves and their families experience that benefit. Communicating is not enough. **“They may not remember what you said, but they will remember how you made them feel.”***

CONCLUSION

The ASF participants agreed that existing collaborative programs should be expanded and new opportunities should be explored to enhance the working relationship between chain community pharmacy and pharmacy education to effectively communicate the value of community pharmacy to the public, policy makers, and pharmacy students. The overall benefits of these collaborative efforts include improving patient care services in the community pharmacy practice setting and empowering pharmacy students to be agents of change.