

Association Management

Background

A large number of pharmacists serve as volunteers in a variety of pharmacy-related professional (individual members) and trade (company members) associations—either as officers (elected) or as committee members (appointed). A smaller but still substantial number of pharmacists choose association management as a career pathway, turning their pharmacy background, experience, and leadership skills into a challenging, full-time career. There are many functional areas found within the scope of pharmacy association management including government relations, clinical education, professional development, and professional advocacy.

Today, more than 151,000 associations exist in the United States, representing nearly every industry, profession, charity, hobby, cause, and interest. There are associations at the local, state, regional, national and international levels. (Source: <http://library.dialog.com/bluesheets/html/bl0114.html#AB>. Accessed April 30, 2013.)

Pharmacy has many national, state, and local associations. “Broad spectrum” associations, representing all pharmacists, such as the American Pharmacists Association, exist at the national level and in all 50 states. Narrower, special-interest organizations of pharmacists (e.g., representing various practice areas) exist at the national level and to a lesser degree at the state or local levels. Virtually all such organizations have pharmacists employed within their full-time professional management team, frequently including the chief executive officer.

Recognizing the need to educate pharmacists for careers in association management, the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) began an Executive Residency in Association Management in 1968. Other pharmacy associations began residencies and fellowships in the 1990s and those currently offering programs include the American Pharmacists Association Foundation, the National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS), and the National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA), the Academy of Managed Care Pharmacists (AMCP), and the Pharmacy Quality Alliance (PQA). The American Pharmacists Association (APhA) also offers APPE rotations and internship opportunities.

Characteristics

Forty pharmacists identified themselves in this category in the 2012 *APhA Career Pathway Evaluation Program* survey. Forty-six percent hold a PharmD degree up significantly from 2007 when only 16% of respondents had either an entry level or post baccalaureate PharmD. Thirty-eight percent indicated they had an advanced degree (MA, MS, MBS, PhD, or other), while 42% had been through a residency program. In addition, 38% had been through a certificate program and 11% reported completing other training. Such additional education might be outside the field of pharmacy, as would be the case in attaining Certified Association Executive status from the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE).

Nearly all respondents indicated that they were satisfied with their job with 75% indicating “extremely satisfied” and 20% indicating “somewhat satisfied.” Similarly, the respondents said that they felt the job was very challenging with 52% indicating “extremely challenging” and 43% indicated they felt the job was “somewhat challenging.”

Respondents’ average age was 45 years old. More than half (58%) of the respondents were male. Income and hours worked per week is highly variable in this field. Fifteen percent reported incomes less than \$100,000 and 33% reported greater than \$150,000. The average time worked per week was 44.5 hours with a standard deviation of 16.

Insider’s Perspective

What aspects of the job are most appealing?

Associations offer a number of programs and services to their members and the public, including professional education meetings, public information and education, codes of conduct/ethics, professional and safety standards, and/or the development of statistical information that are heavily depended upon by businesses and government. This diversity of scope is reflected by respondents, with 52% stating that the most appealing aspect of the position is diversity of the work. Forty-three 43% cited the ability to “advocate on behalf of the profession” and “influence public policy” as the most appealing aspect of association management.

What aspects of the job are least appealing?

No one single factor was listed by the respondents as a least appealing feature of the position. Both the amount of travel and long hours were each cited by several of the respondents as the least appealing aspects they see. Other comments such as “continuous e-mail,” “demanding workload,” and “long time away when traveling” were frequently repeated.

What advice should students and practitioners consider when selecting the option of association management?

Many of the respondents recommended that pharmacists have prior practice experience if contemplating a career in pharmacy association management. Communication skills were cited as being vitally important for this field. Several indicated that those considering this field need the ability to be self-starters and to multitask.

= 8.7



Problem Solving

A tendency toward solving problems by untested methods is used more often than past methods. Given the wide variety of issues addressed and programs and services offered, it is common for association managers to find innovative solutions. One Michigan respondent summed a number of these factors by stating that pharmacists in association management “must be able to work independently, multitask, and problem solve efficiently.”

= 6.9



Focus of Expertise

The amount of generally defined versus sharply defined expertise leaves these respondents precisely mid-range. Because of the wide variety of issues, programs, and services, part of an association management career requires a broad set of skills and expertise. Some association positions, however, may be more specialist than generalist, for example a public policy director or meeting planner.

= 4.2



Innovative Thinking

Association management pharmacists lean heavily toward the need for innovative thinking as a component of their jobs. Generating new ideas within the profession of pharmacy is a mainstay of the field, according to these data. Again, the variety of professional and public issues that association managers must deal with requires innovative thinking and new approaches. This group rated this factor the highest for all profiles.

= 8.3



Applying Scientific Knowledge

Applying scientific knowledge received a mid-range score of 4.9. Association managers may find that their basic pharmacy education is useful background, underpinning their daily functions in management, meeting planning, public education, and writing.

Pressure/Stress

Association management pharmacists report experiencing a high level of pressure and stress in their work with an upper range score of 7.4. Related factors (e.g., workload, frequent shortage of resources) may be likely contributors. The political pressures of professional leadership responsibilities also may contribute to stress in these positions. One respondent from Virginia stated that stress can occur and association managers must “be ready to multitask with little staff backup.”

= 6.8



Work Schedule

Association managers report their work between predictable and unpredictable with a rating of 5.4. This may reflect the different types of positions held within the association environment as well as seasonal variations (e.g., during active legislative sessions, near annual meeting time).

= 5.3



Part-Time Opportunities

Relatively little opportunity for part-time employment of pharmacists in this field exists with a score of 4.0. Variations exist among national, state, and local associations. Many state or local specialty associations cannot support a full-time executive and either hire a part-time pharmacist or contract with an association management firm.

= 2.9



Job-Sharing Opportunities

Job-sharing is not a common practice in associations, which is reinforced by the low ranking of this factor.

= 2.7



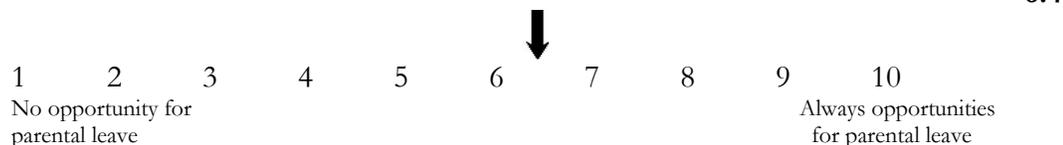
Exit/Re-entry Opportunities

Exit/re-entry opportunities are mid-range in this practice environment.



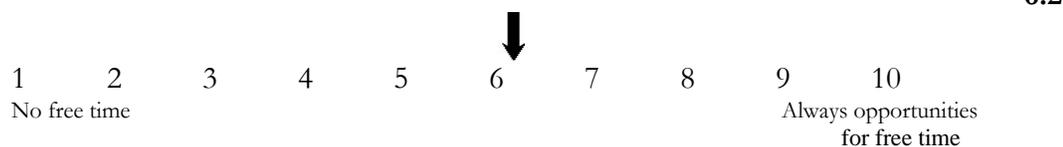
Parental Leave Opportunities

Parental leave opportunities ranked higher than others in the areas of work-related options. Most associations provide the opportunity for parental leave when possible.



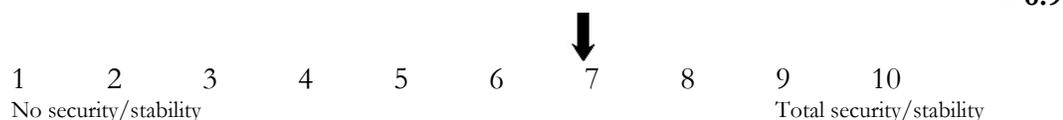
Leisure/Family Time

Association management pharmacists are able to enjoy a relative amount of free time for family and personal activities. Satisfactory scheduling of personal time seems manageable.



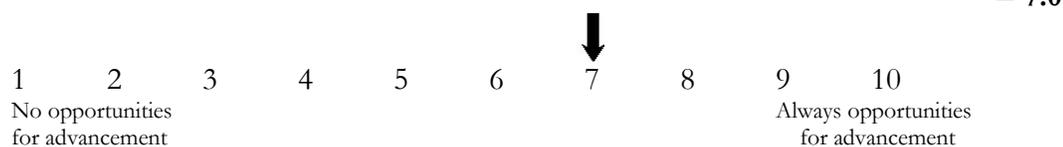
Job Security

Job security of association management pharmacists was ranked at 8.4 on the likert scale. While chief executives in this field usually hold employment contracts, they are employed by a board of directors with many members. As the board's composition changes, so can the group's priorities and their assessment of the chief executive's position. Overall, job security is still relatively high, reflecting the fact that most staff members do not report to volunteer boards but serve as employees.



Opportunities for Advancement

Association management pharmacists reported a mid-range level of opportunities for advancement. Generally speaking, state and local level pharmacy associations are not large organizations when compared with the national associations where greater opportunities exist for advancement. One Washington, DC, respondent indicated, "Association management provides a career ladder from entry-level positions through senior management and executive leadership."



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Opportunities for Leadership Development

At 8.0, association managers report ample opportunities for leadership development with near unanimity. This may not be surprising, given association management pharmacists are, almost by definition, in positions of leadership within the profession. In addition, many national associations provide leadership development to its members, thereby providing this service to staff as well.

= 8.3



Community Prestige

Association managers enjoy a high level of respect within the community for the positions they hold. In part, this may be due to their visibility within the community, for example in legislative and public affairs, as well as their relationships with other association managers outside the field of pharmacy.

= 7.3



Professional Involvement

Far and away with the highest-level response (9.6) for this group, association management pharmacists report ample opportunity for professional involvement. Pharmacy meeting attendance is more than an opportunity—it's a requirement of the position! State and national association gatherings, inter- and intra-professional opportunities, and association management seminars are among areas of involvement. This factor was rated the highest by this group across all profiles.

= 9.2



Income

Respondents indicated that they are above the mid-range of being properly versus not properly compensated for their professional services. As a general rule, salaries of entry-level association positions are less than those of entry level-pharmacist positions in more traditional careers.

= 7.5



Mean Scores for Critical Factors

1. Interaction with people	5.6
2. Performing physical assessments	1.1
3. Interpreting laboratory values	1.1
4. Continuity of relationships	5.6
5. Extent to which effect is direct	2.6
6. Collaboration with other professionals	5.6
7. Educating other professionals	5.1
8. Variety of daily activities	8.5
9. Multiple task handling	8.7
10. Problem solving	6.9
11. Focus of expertise	4.2
12. Innovative thinking	8.3
13. Applying scientific knowledge	4.2
14. Applying medical knowledge	3.6
15. Creating new knowledge by conducting research	4.0
16. Managing others	5.9
17. Managing business operations	6.4
18. Pressure/Stress	6.8
19. Work schedule	5.3
20. Part time opportunities	2.9
21. Job sharing	2.7
22. Exit and re-entry	4.5
23. Parental leave	6.4
24. Free time for leisure/family activities	6.2
25. Job security	6.9
26. Opportunities for advancement	7.0
27. Opportunities for leadership development	8.3
28. Community prestige	7.3
29. Professional involvement	9.2
30. Income	7.5
31. Benefits (vacation, health, retirement)	8.1
32. Geographic location	3.6
33. Working Remotely	5.5
34. Autonomy	7.2
35. Self-Worth	7.8
36. Future focus	8.0
37. Professional prestige	8.2
38. Unique practice environment	9.0
39. Advanced degree	5.1
40. Entrepreneurial opportunity	6.0
41. Additional training	6.0
42. Interacting with co-workers	7.7
43. Travel	5.1
44. Writing	6.9
45. Working with teams	7.3

Reference

Schommer JC, *APhA Career Pathway Evaluation Program for Pharmacy Professionals 2012 Pharmacist Profile Survey*. February 2013.

Professional Organizations

American Pharmacists Association (APhA)
2215 Constitution Ave, NW, Washington, DC 20037
Tel: 800-237-APhA Fax: 202-783-2351
www.pharmacist.com

American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP)
1727 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22314
Tel: 703-739-2330 Fax: 703-836-8982
www.aacp.org

American Society of Association Executives (ASAE)
1575 I Street NW, Washington, DC 20005
Tel: 202-626-2723 TDD: 202-626-2803 Fax: 202-371-8825
www.asaenet.org

American Society of Consultant Pharmacists (ASCP)
1321 Duke Street, Alexandria, VA 22314
Tel: 703-739-1300 Fax: 703-739-1321
www.ascp.com

American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP)
7272 Wisconsin Avenue, Bethesda, MD 20814
Tel: 301-657-3000
www.ashp.org

National Association of Chain Drug Stores
1776 Wilson Blvd., Suite 200, Arlington, VA 22209
Tel: 703-549-3001 Fax: 703-836-4869
www.nacds.org

National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA)
205 Daingerfield Road, Alexandria, VA 22314
Tel: 703-683-8200 Toll-Free: 800-544-7447 Fax: 703-683-3619
www.ncpanet.org

National Alliance of State Pharmacy Associations
2530 Professional Road, Suite 202, Richmond, VA 23235
Tel: 804-285-4431 Fax: 804-612-6555
www.naspa.us