

Chain Community Pharmacy

Background

Chain pharmacy provides two primary career paths for pharmacists: management and staff. As a general definition, a community pharmacy is considered a “chain community pharmacy” if the organization consists of four or more stores.

Community pharmacy is often seen as an excellent opportunity to conduct basic preliminary health assessments of patients. Quick evaluation of symptoms, laboratory values, and other indicators can be helpful in directing patients’ therapy, especially as the community pharmacists’ role in overall patient care continues to expand, such as by providing immunizations and medication therapy management (MTM) services.

In chain community pharmacy, the breadth of duties of a manager is defined by the size and requirements of the pharmacy or organization. At the store level, the pharmacy manager is typically in charge of the staff, patient care services, inventory management, recruitment, training and development, and general business management. In larger chains, especially those that are corporately owned or franchised, there are many more levels of management that extend from district managers to pharmacy operation executives, with the scope of responsibilities expanding accordingly. Pharmacists are critical in upper management of corporate chains because they provide real-world practice knowledge and experience when making crucial pharmacy business decisions. More details about this type of role can be found in the profile for Corporate Management.

As the provision of pharmacists’ patient care services within the community setting expands, there are new positions emerging in chain community pharmacy that are focused on the management and training of pharmacists delivering these services. The role of these pharmacists – whose titles may include “clinical coordinators” – varies in different chains but can include providing direct patient care to many pharmacies within a district, training staff pharmacists to provide new clinical services, seeking out contracts with local health care payers such as employers, public health entities and collaborating with other health care providers.

Characteristics

One-hundred sixty-nine chain community pharmacists responded to the 2012 *APhA Career Pathway Evaluation Program* Survey. Forty-nine percent reported having a PharmD degree. Seventeen percent had obtained an advanced degree such as an MA, MS, MBA, PhD, or other. Six percent had been through a residency, 45% had some type of certification, and 8% had completed some other type of training.

Respondents’ average age was 46 years old. Slightly more than half (57%) of respondents were female. Income data show 27% earn less than \$100,000 (includes those working part time) and 48% earn \$100,000 - \$130,000. The average time worked per week was 46 hours.

Most of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with their work, with 23% indicating “extremely satisfied” and 44% indicating “somewhat satisfied.” Thirty percent of respondents said that they felt the work was “extremely challenging” and 49% indicated it was “somewhat challenging.”

Insider’s Perspective

What aspects of the job are most appealing?

Many of the respondents indicated that the time that they get to spend interacting with patients is the most appealing aspect of their job. Some mentioned that the appreciation shown to them by customers and the ability to fill their needs are particularly rewarding. One respondent commented that “working in a pharmacy in a grocery store in the community where I live is like an old-fashioned community pharmacy. I know my patients and they know me. Also it affords a great opportunity to discuss how lifestyle changes can make a difference in health.”

Other pharmacists commented that they enjoyed the flexible work hours, good salary, working with students and providing MTM and immunization services.

What aspects of the job are least appealing?

Many pharmacists made comments about how difficult it can be at times to operate under the stress of filling a large volume of prescriptions quickly. Others said that it is sometimes difficult to take breaks when there are many patients waiting for their medications. One pharmacist said that “the pace of the work place is too fast some days to give the patient the time they need.”

Keeping in mind that patients often go to the pharmacy at the end of a long day of being sick and waiting for doctor appointments, it makes sense that some pharmacists said that patients are sometimes difficult to deal with. Many pharmacists also said that it is challenging to work through billing and insurance problems.

What advice should students and practitioners consider when selecting the option of chain community pharmacy management?

Many of the respondents to this survey said that it is very important for someone considering a career in chain pharmacy to be a “people person” because of all the work that is done with the public.

One pharmacist had the following advice: “Need to be a people person and a good multitasker. Be willing to get involved in your community and with community and other healthcare organizations. Stay informed about and get engaged with state and national issues that impact pharmacy practice.”

Problem Solving

In the chain community pharmacy setting, problem solving ranked 4.2 for respondents. This rating most likely reflects that the problems themselves do not vary greatly. Rather it is merely the individual or store involved in the issue that is different. Many cited the need to problem solve to resolve insurance issues.

= 4.2



Focus of Expertise

Pharmacists working in a community ambulatory setting do not need quite the same intensive focus as those in more specialized settings (e.g., organ transplantation in a hospital setting). Rather, these pharmacists need to have a broad body of knowledge to be able to answer any questions a patient may have.

= 3.6



Innovative Thinking

The low to mid-range response of 4.1 indicates that chain community pharmacists are involved in some innovative thinking. Opportunities for idea generating in these positions may include workflow streamlining, developing pharmacy services marketing plans, and making the business grow. Some respondents also indicated the need to be innovative with scheduling staff.

= 4.1



Applying Scientific Knowledge

Chain community pharmacists have the opportunity to exercise the scientific knowledge they gained in pharmacy school about the medications they are dispensing and in helping their patients get well.

= 4.7

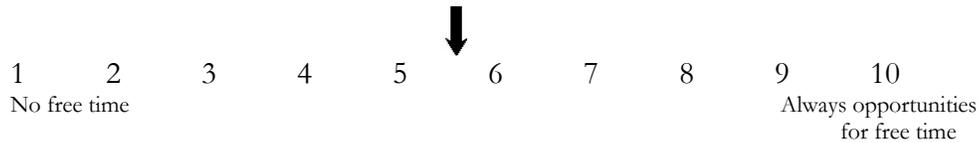


Applying Medical Knowledge

The score for applying medical knowledge (5.6) was slightly higher than for scientific knowledge. This makes sense considering these pharmacists are applying medical knowledge every time they check a prescription, counsel a patient, or provide a clinical service.

able to better plan for leisure time or time with their families. However, sometimes there is a long lead time required when requesting time off.

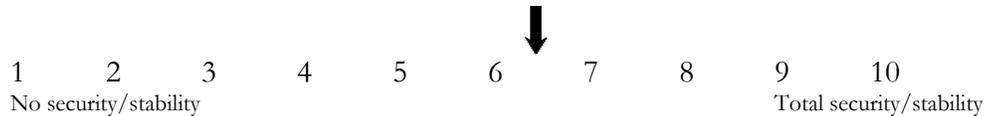
= 5.6



Job Security

All respondents to the 2012 survey still felt they had security/stability in their job.

= 6.4



Opportunities for Advancement

“Opportunities for advancement” scored mid-range with a 4.7 from respondents. These opportunities greatly depend on the size of the organization for which the pharmacist works. There will be much more opportunity to move up the ladder in a corporate chain compared with a privately owned chain with fewer stores.

= 4.7



Opportunities for Leadership Development

Leadership development is often a critical component of personal career development. Respondents indicated that there are some opportunities for leadership development in this practice setting.

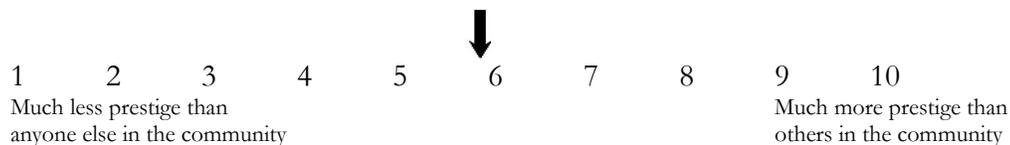
= 5.0



Community Prestige

In community prestige, chain community pharmacists scored in the mid-range at 5.8. Community pharmacists often become well known in their community for helping individuals with health care.

= 5.8



Professional Involvement

Professional involvement of individual pharmacists is critical to the development of the pharmacy profession as a whole. Pharmacists need to communicate with each other so that the profession can continue to advance in providing optimum health care for the public. In this survey, it was reported that chain community pharmacists have a mid-range response regarding the opportunity to be professionally involved in meetings and events. This differs at the local, state, and national levels and from chain to chain.

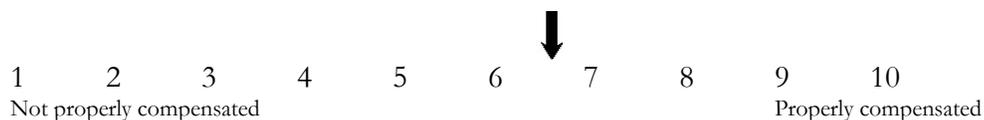
= 4.6



Income

Respondents indicated that they are slightly above the mid-range of being properly versus not properly compensated for their professional services. However, many advised those looking at career opportunities in chain community pharmacy that it is “important to consider every aspect of the position and not just the money.”

= 6.6



Benefits (vacation, health, retirement)

Chain community pharmacists gave their benefits an even higher rating than their income in the survey. Often pharmacists receive a benefits package that includes bonuses, health coverage, and retirement plans.

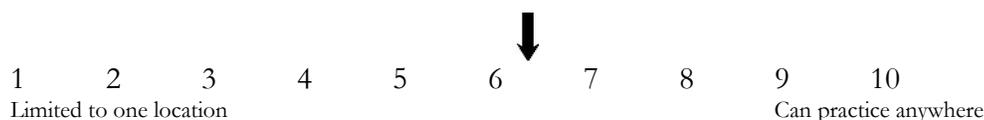
= 7.1



Geographic location

As many community pharmacy organizations have regional or national store locations, pharmacists in this area stated that there is the opportunity to relocate.

= 6.3



Working Remotely

Nearly none of the work done by community pharmacists can be done remotely.

= 1.7



= 2.6



Advanced Degree

In management, an advanced degree will typically be needed in the higher rungs of the corporate ladder. An MBA, for instance, may not be as necessary in a smaller company or at the store level.

= 2.4



Entrepreneurial Opportunity

Entrepreneurial opportunity varies based on the individual chain corporation. In a privately held company, some owners may offer their pharmacists a share of the business as employment incentives and other owners let their pharmacists run the pharmacy as though they owned it themselves. There are fewer entrepreneurial opportunities available in the larger, corporate chain pharmacies.

= 2.9



Additional Training

Many chain community pharmacists obtain additional training. According to this survey, 45% have completed a certificate training program.

= 5.2



Interacting With Colleagues

As one would suspect, chain community pharmacists interact with coworkers on a daily basis.

= 6.9



Travel

Chain community pharmacists for the most part have lower needs to travel for their day-to-day activities.

= 2.5

**Writing**

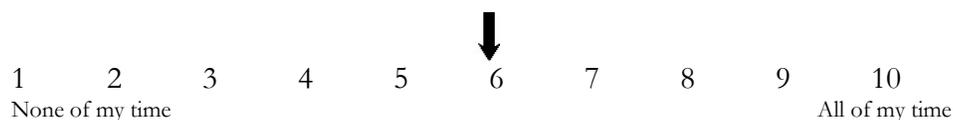
Respondents were in the low range regarding writing. While pharmacists may need to file reports, many of these are templates that require financial and personnel information to be filled in.

= 2.0

**Working With Teams**

Pharmacists in the community setting work mainly with the pharmacy staff team including other pharmacists, technicians, and interns.

= 5.9

**Mean Scores for Critical Factors**

1. Interaction with people	7.2
2. Performing physical assessments	2.4
3. Interpreting laboratory values	1.5
4. Continuity of relationships	6.4
5. Extent to which effect is direct	6.3
6. Collaboration with other professionals	3.9
7. Educating other professionals	2.8
8. Variety of daily activities	4.2
9. Multiple task handling	8.6
10. Problem solving	4.2
11. Focus of expertise	3.6
12. Innovative thinking	4.1
13. Applying scientific knowledge	4.7
14. Applying medical knowledge	5.6
15. Creating new knowledge by conducting research	1.8
16. Managing others	6.3
17. Managing business operations	5.1
18. Pressure/Stress	8.2
19. Work schedule	6.6
20. Part time opportunities	5.7
21. Job sharing	2.5
22. Exit and re-entry	5.0
23. Parental leave	6.0
24. Free time for leisure/family activities	5.6

25. Job security	6.4
26. Opportunities for advancement	4.7
27. Opportunities for leadership development	5.0
28. Community prestige	5.8
29. Professional involvement	4.6
30. Income	6.6
31. Benefits (vacation, health, retirement)	7.1
32. Geographic location	6.3
33. Working Remotely	1.7
34. Autonomy	5.3
35. Self-Worth	6.0
36. Future focus	4.5
37. Professional prestige	4.2
38. Unique practice environment	2.6
39. Advanced degree	2.2
40. Entrepreneurial opportunity	2.9
41. Additional training	5.2
42. Interacting with co-workers	6.9
43. Travel	2.5
44. Writing	2.0
45. Working with teams	5.9

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

National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS)
1776 Wilson Blvd, Suite 200, Arlington, VA, 22209
Tel: 703-549-3001
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 Pharmaceutical Association (NPhA)
107 Kilmayne Drive, Suite C, Cary, NC 27511
Tel: 800-944-NPhA Fax: 919-469-5870
www.npha.net