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Ranks of pharmacists shrinking as job demands grow

National Pharmacist Workforce Study in JAPhA: Pharmacists want to spend more time counseling patients, less time dispensing drugs.

The U.S. pharmacy profession could face a worsening shortage of pharmacists in the next decade as more men prepare to retire and more men and women opt for part-time work, according to a new study released today by the Pharmacy Manpower Project, Inc. (PMP). The National Pharmacist Workforce Study finds the potential worsening shortfall coming at a pivotal time with pharmacists wanting to spend less time dispensing drugs and more time providing patient-centered services such as immunizations and counseling seniors on proper medication usage and the Medicare Prescription Drug Plan. The study was released today in advance of publication at APhA2006, the American Pharmacists Association's Annual Meeting & Exposition. PDF files of the four articles detailing the study results can be downloaded using the below links; the articles will appear in print in the May/June 2006 issue of the *Journal of the American Pharmacists Association (JAPhA)*.

The number of practicing women pharmacists increased from 31% in 1990 to 46% in 2004. The study finds a large percentage of men pharmacists nearing retirement, with more than 4 in 10 (41.2%) age 55 and over, compared with only about 10% of women pharmacists. Meanwhile, more pharmacists of both genders are working part-time—27% of women and 15.5% of men in 2004 (compared with 23.4% and 11.6%, respectively, in 2000).

"The changing face of pharmacy will be increasingly evident in the next 5 to 10 years with more women in the workforce, the potential for more part-time work by pharmacists, and the desire of pharmacists to spend more time on counseling and other patient services," says David A. Mott, PhD, the study's project director and associate professor and Hammel/Sanders chair in pharmacy administration at the University of Wisconsin.

Although the trend of part-time work is increasing for both men and women pharmacists, the study finds the trend toward more part-time work is being fueled by women. For women aged 31–50 years, more than 30% are working part-time.

Pharmacists' roles are very diverse. In 2004 pharmacists spent 49% of their typical day dispensing drugs and 32% of their time on activities such as advising patients on drug therapies, evaluating the safety of drug therapy, administering vaccines, and counseling patients on services ranging from self-care to disease management. The results suggest pharmacists would like to spend only 39% of their day dispensing drugs and increase the time spent providing services to patients to 48% of their day.

"The roles of pharmacists continue to expand to meet the growing and diverse needs of patients," says Lucinda L. Maine, PhD, PMP president and executive vice president of the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy. Maine cited the critical role that pharmacists have played this year in administering the Medicare Prescription Drug Plan.

Consistent with the growing number of prescriptions dispensed in community pharmacies, the workload for pharmacists has increased between 2000 and 2004. Pharmacists report the high

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workload can negatively affect their work, including activities such as ability to take a break (48%), opportunity to reduce errors (36%), time spent with patients (35%), and ability to solve drug therapy problems (33%).

The most stressful events for pharmacists include inadequate pharmacy technician staffing levels (38%), telephone interruptions (37%), and inadequate pharmacists' staffing (34%). "Dealing with difficult patients" and "dealing with difficult coworkers" are cited by 33% of pharmacists.

Despite the high workload, the study finds a high level of job satisfaction. More than three-quarters (77%) of pharmacists in 2004 report a "high level" of job satisfaction compared with 66% in 2000.

"This study shows the need for pharmacy schools to produce the best and brightest to meet these new health care challenges and provide patients with the highest level of quality care," says Maine.

Results of the *National Pharmacist Workforce Study* were compiled by a questionnaire completed by 1,470 practicing pharmacists.

The study was commissioned by the PMP. The PMP comprises the Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy, American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy, American College of Apothecaries, American College of Clinical Pharmacy, American Pharmacists Association, American Society of Consultant Pharmacists, American Society of Health-System Pharmacists, Bureau of Health Professions, National Association of Chain Drug Stores, National Community Pharmacists Association, National Council of State Pharmacy Association Executives, National Pharmaceutical Association, Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, and Pharmacy Technician Certification Board.

Web links

- [Pharmacist Participation in the Workforce: 1990, 2000, and 2004](#), by David A. Mott, William R. Doucette, Caroline A. Gaither, David H. Kreling, Craig A. Pedersen, and Jon C. Schommer. *J Am Pharm Assoc.* 2006;46:e14–e22.
- [Community Pharmacists' Work Environments: Evidence from the 2004 National Pharmacist Workforce Study](#), by David H. Kreling, William R. Doucette, David A. Mott, Caroline A. Gaither, Craig A. Pedersen, and Jon C. Schommer. *J Am Pharm Assoc.* 2006;46:e23–e31.
- [Pharmacists' Desired and Actual Times in Work Activities: Evidence of Gaps from the 2004 National Pharmacist Workforce Study](#), by Jon C. Schommer, Craig A. Pedersen, Caroline A. Gaither, William R. Doucette, David H. Kreling, and David A. Mott. *J Am Pharm Assoc.* 2006;46:e32–e39.
- [Evaluation of Community Pharmacy Service Mix: Evidence from the 2004 National Pharmacist Workforce Study](#), by William R. Doucette, David H. Kreling, Jon C. Schommer, Caroline A. Gaither, David A. Mott, and Craig A. Pedersen. *J Am Pharm Assoc.* 2006;46:e40–e47.

Contact the writer: [L. Michael Posey, BPharm, Pharmacy Today](#)

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