



Original Research

Pharmacists' self-perceptions in relation to the 'Advanced Pharmacy Practice Framework'

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Abstract

Background: The Australian Pharmacy Practice Framework was developed by the Advanced Pharmacy Practice Steering Committee and endorsed by the Pharmacy Board of Australia in October 2012. The Steering Committee conducted a study that found practice portfolios to be the preferred method to assess and credential Advanced Pharmacy Practitioner, which is currently being piloted by the Australian Pharmacy Council. Credentialing is predicted to open to all pharmacists practising in Australia by November 2015.

Objective: To explore how Australian pharmacists self-perceived being advanced in practice and how they related their level of practice to the Australian Advanced Pharmacy Practice Framework.

Method: This was an explorative, cross-sectional study with mixed methods analysis. Advanced Pharmacy Practice Framework, a review of the recent explorative study on Advanced Practice conducted by the Advanced Pharmacy Practice Framework Steering Committee and semi-structured interviews ($n = 10$) were utilized to create, refine and pilot the questionnaire. The questionnaire was advertised across pharmacy-organizational websites via a purposive sampling method. The target population were pharmacists currently registered in Australia.

Results: Seventy-two participants responded to the questionnaire. The participants were mostly female (56.9%) and in the 30–40 age group (26.4%). The pharmacists self-perceived their levels of practice as either entry, transition, consolidation or advanced, with the majority selecting the consolidation level (38.9%). Although nearly half (43.1%) of the participants had not seen the Framework beforehand, they defined Advanced Pharmacy Practice similarly to the definition outlined in the Framework, but also added specialization as a requirement. Pharmacists explained why they were practising at their level of practice, stating that not having more years of practice, lacking experience, or postgraduate/post-registration qualifications, and more involvement and recognition in practice were the main reasons for not considering themselves as an Advanced Pharmacy Practitioner. To be considered advanced by the Framework, pharmacists would need to fulfill at least 70% of the Advanced Practice competency standards at an advanced level. More than half of the pharmacists (64.7%) that self-perceived as being advanced managed to fulfill 70% or more of these Advanced Practice competency standards at the advanced level. However,

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none of the self-perceived entry level pharmacists managed to match at least 70% of the competencies at the entry level.

Conclusion: Participants' self-perception of the term Advanced Practice was similar to the definition in the Advanced Pharmacy Practice Framework. Pharmacists working at an advanced level were largely able to demonstrate and justify their reasons for being advanced practitioners. However, pharmacists practising at the other levels of practice (entry, transition, consolidation) require further guidance regarding their advancement in practice.

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Introduction

Pharmacy has evolved from a traditional role of dispensing and compounding to that of a more patient focused approach.^{1–4} There is now increasing acceptance by other health professionals to integrate Pharmacy into multidisciplinary teams in hospitals and general practices.^{5–8} However, although community pharmacies are 'one of the most trusted and visited health care destination in Australia,' there is still uncertainty within the general public as to the role of Australian pharmacists beyond that of medicine suppliers and advisors.^{9–11}

The Advanced Pharmacy Practice Framework (APPF) was developed by the Advanced Pharmacy Practice Steering Committee (APPFSC) and endorsed by the Pharmacy Board of Australia (PBA) in October 2012.¹² The APPFs' aim was to enable pharmacists working at an advanced level of practice to gain formal recognition and aspire other pharmacists to work toward advancement.¹² The APPF defines Advanced Practice as practice that is so significantly different than that achieved at initial registration that it warrants recognition by professional peers and the public of the expertise of the practitioner and the education, training and experience from which that capability was derived.^{12,13} It outlines the advanced knowledge, skills and attributes that pharmacists should possess to be recognized as Advanced Pharmacy Practitioners.¹²

Currently pharmacists in Australia do not have a formalized professional development pathway to recognize them beyond their entry-level competencies which are defined by the National Competency Standards Framework for Pharmacists in Australia 2010 (National Framework).^{4,12,14,15} In order to enhance these entry-level competencies, there is a need for Continuing Professional

Development (CPD) and a requirement to identify the necessary improvements in one's own expertise in order to facilitate the transition to advance in practice.^{12,15} CPD can be obtained through an increase in scope of practice which narrows as a pharmacist becomes more focused on a specific area of practice.^{4,12} The term 'specialization' is usually used when a pharmacist has a defined expert scope of practice.^{4,12} This term is widely used by other health professions, such as Dentistry and Medicine.¹⁵ The increase in CPD through pharmacists performance level consists of an increase in expertise, training and experiences.¹² This increase in performance level eventually leads to a 'threshold' and it is here that advanced practice is defined.¹²

The APPFSC noted the work that had already been done by the United Kingdom (UK) Competency and Evaluation Group (CoDEG), the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS), and the Pharmacy Council of New Zealand.^{12,16,17} The Advanced – to – Consultant Level Framework (ACLF) developed by CoDEG, and the RPS Advanced Pharmacy Framework had significantly facilitated the concept of Advanced Pharmacy Practice in Australia.^{12,15–18} The APPFSC used the National Framework as well as these frameworks as the backbone to develop the APPF.¹² The APPFSC also conducted an explorative study around the perspectives of the Australian Pharmacy profession in relation to Advanced Practice.¹⁹ The exploration helped ascertain the best method to assess Advanced Practitioners and targeted pharmacists that were either already advanced or were actively working toward advancement.¹⁹

The APPF describes the 'general' level requirements which related to the competency standards described in the National Framework.⁴ The next part describes the general characteristics of pharmacists that are progressing toward

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