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Opinion

# Evaluation of perceptions regarding Top 200 drug information exercises in a pharmaceutical care lab curriculum

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## Abstract

This study evaluated perceptions regarding the effectiveness of Top 200 drug information exercises in a pharmaceutical care lab (PCL) curriculum. Questionnaires were distributed online via Qualtrics<sup>TM</sup> to fourth-year (PY4) students and advanced pharmacy practice experience (APPE) preceptors. The PY4 questionnaire inquired about perceptions of usefulness of current exercises and possible areas of future focus. The preceptor questionnaire inquired about preparedness of students for APPE rotations. Response rates for student and preceptor questionnaires were 43.7% ( $n = 72$ ) and 15.1% ( $n = 128$ ), respectively. Overall, 93% of students felt current exercises were helpful in learning the material, and 86% felt prepared at the start of APPEs with regard to Top 200 drug information. Of the practitioners that precept for multiple schools, 40% (35/88) felt students were better prepared in this area, as compared to students from other institutions. Information from this study identified strengths and weaknesses of the current process. Areas of future focus could include dosing information and major drug interactions.

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## Introduction

Pharmacists are considered the “medication experts” in health care. With an ever-increasing number of medications being brought to the market, it is more important than ever for pharmacists to stay up to date regarding medication knowledge.<sup>1,2</sup> Pharmacy schools strive to develop strong drug information skills in their future pharmacy practitioners, as these individuals will likely be the primary source of drug information.<sup>2</sup> While it is pertinent that pharmacists understand where to search for drug information, there is often the expectation that they are knowledgeable of basic information without the use of additional resources.

In an effort to establish this foundational knowledge, many schools require student pharmacists to learn the Top 100–300 most common drugs. This can be done longitudinally with the incorporation of learning activities and assessments, or as its own dedicated course, depending on the school’s curriculum. Assessment of this knowledge can be in the form of high-stakes exams, with students being required to achieve a passing grade.<sup>3</sup> The feasibility of web-based examinations as an assessment tool for this information has been studied<sup>3</sup>; however, minimal literature is available evaluating the effectiveness of Top 200 drug information exercises as they are incorporated in pharmacy curricula as a whole. A study by Wang et al. looked at drug information and evaluation skills in a broader sense. This study examined how drug information skills were taught as part of pharmacy curricula and found almost 50% of survey respondents indicated that there was a laboratory or recitation component involved in the dissemination of this

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content area.<sup>2</sup> This could suggest that the laboratory or recitation setting may be a good place to teach or reinforce these skills.

At a school of pharmacy, Top 200 drug information exercises are currently integrated into the pharmaceutical care lab (PCL) curriculum throughout the five-semester sequence, starting in the fall of the first professional year and continuing consecutively through the fall of the third professional year. For the PCL courses, students are divided into small groups of eight to 12, and each group is facilitated by a teaching assistant (TA), who is either a third-year student pharmacist (for the first-year students) or pharmacy resident (for the second- and third-year students). The PCL curriculum includes a variety of content including the Top 200 drug information exercises, compounding activities, patient counseling, errors and omissions

(prescription processing exercises), patient assessment, calculations, and other activities as appropriate.

For the Top 200 drug information assignments, students are provided a list of drugs each semester. The list is created from the Top 200 lists as published in *Pharmacy Times* that lists the drugs by both number of prescriptions sold and highest dollar amounts. The list is updated annually based on the revised lists published in *Pharmacy Times* each year.<sup>4</sup> The Top 200 drug list is split in half to cover approximately 100 drugs per semester. Course coordinators further divide the lists each semester into smaller segments (seven to 12 drugs) that are assigned weekly and correspond with concurrent therapeutic Topics (e.g., anti-hypertensive and anti-hyperlipidemia drugs during the cardiovascular module) when possible. Figure 1 depicts an illustration of the PCL course Top 200 sequence.

Year	P1		P2		P3
Course	PCL I (Fall)	PCL II (Spring)	PCL III (Fall)	PCL IV (Spring)	PCL V (Fall)
<b>Concurrent Didactic Coursework</b>	Basic Science courses, Professional Development, Health Systems	Basic Science courses, Pharmacodynamics, Immunizations, Introduction to Pharm Care (includes drug information), Professional Development	Pharmacokinetics, Med Chem, Drug Lit, Endocrinology, Dermatology, Pulmonology, GI, Professional Development	Pharmacokinetics, Med Chem, OTC, Cardiology, Nephrology, Neurology, Psychiatry, Professional Development	Med Chem, Hematology/Oncology, Infectious Disease, Immunology, Professional Development
<b>Number of Drugs Learned in the Semester</b>	~100 Drugs	~100 Drugs	~100 Drugs	~100 Drugs	~100 Drugs
<b>Drug Information Learned</b>	brand and generic names, therapeutic classification, and Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved indication(s)	brand and generic names, therapeutic classification, and Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved indication(s)	brand and generic names, therapeutic classification, and Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved indication(s) + mechanism of action, pregnancy category X medications, and boxed warnings	brand and generic names, therapeutic classification, and Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved indication(s) + mechanism of action, pregnancy category X medications, and boxed warnings	brand and generic names, therapeutic classification, and Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved indication(s) + mechanism of action, pregnancy category X medications, and boxed warnings + common side effects
<b>Current Types of Assessments</b>	Weekly quizzes, Final exam	Weekly quizzes, Final exam	Weekly quizzes	Weekly quizzes, High stakes cumulative exam* (brand-generic names only)	Weekly quizzes, High stakes cumulative exam* (brand-generic names, therapeutic classification, FDA-approved indications)

\*High stakes cumulative exam required a passing score of  $\geq 75\%$

Fig. 1. PCL course Top 200 sequence outline.

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