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Research

# Perceptions, obstacles, and solutions for offering Introductory Pharmacy Practice Experiences in the community hospital setting: A qualitative survey

Tina Harrach Denetclaw, PharmD, BCPS<sup>a,\*</sup>, Elizabeth W. Young, PharmD, BCPS<sup>b</sup>,  
Amy M. Tiemeier, PharmD, BCPS<sup>c</sup>, James D. Scott, PharmD, FCCP<sup>d</sup>,  
Melody L. Hartzler, PharmD, AE-C, BCACP<sup>e</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Clinical Pharmacy, School of Pharmacy, University of California—San Francisco, San Francisco, CA

<sup>b</sup> Clinical Pharmacist, Thrombosis Service University of Utah Hospitals and Clinics Salt Lake City, UT

<sup>c</sup> St. Louis College of Pharmacy, St. Louis, MO

<sup>d</sup> Western University of Health Sciences College of Pharmacy, Pomona, CA

<sup>e</sup> Cedarville University School of Pharmacy, Cedarville, OH

## Abstract

**Objective:** We sought to identify barriers and possible solutions for community hospitals providing Introductory Pharmacy Practice Experiences (IPPE).

**Methods:** A survey was developed and made available online to a segment of members of the American College of Clinical Pharmacy. Responses were collected anonymously. Results of the survey were assessed using descriptive statistics.

**Results:** A total of 45 individuals who self-identified as being employed in acute care hospitals or hospital systems currently hosting IPPE students responded to the survey, with 35 of these individuals completing the entire survey. Pharmacy department staff-, school-, and student-related burdens and barriers were identified, and successful approaches to providing IPPE were described. It is unknown how many members receiving the survey practice in acute care community hospital settings, so the true response rate for this survey is unknown, and the responses to this survey cannot be generalized.

**Conclusions:** Informed planning and preceptor support for IPPE may enhance the quality of learning activities available to students and decrease the burden of providing IPPE for hospital-based preceptors. This survey provides preliminary information that may be built upon; a subsequent quantitative study is needed to glean generalizable information on this topic.

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**Keywords:** Experiential; Introductory pharmacy practice experiences; Pharmacy education

## Introduction

As the profession of pharmacy has evolved, the framework by which we educate professional pharmacy students has changed. Our pharmacy education model in the last decade has shifted from a product focus to patient focus as schools seek to train pharmacists who are patient care providers.

\* Corresponding author: Tina Harrach Denetclaw, PharmD, BCPS, Department of Clinical Pharmacy, School of Pharmacy, University of California—San Francisco, San Francisco, CA 94143-0622.

E-mail: [denetclawt@pharmacy.ucsf.edu](mailto:denetclawt@pharmacy.ucsf.edu)

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The newest Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) standards require that at least 5% of the curriculum (300 hours) be devoted to Introductory Pharmacy Practice Experiences (IPPEs).<sup>1</sup> These standards also “require active participation” by the student in direct patient care. Colleges of pharmacy agree that introducing students to the practice of pharmacy early in their professional development benefits them by reinforcing their didactic learning, enhancing professional development, and assists students in defining their career pathway.<sup>2</sup> A well-structured IPPE that provides students with coordinated learning experiences is rewarding for both the student as well as the preceptor.<sup>3</sup>

Defining preceptor needs is crucial to the sustainability and success of an IPPE program. Surveys of preceptor needs have found that they desire training and training needs to be ongoing.<sup>4</sup> Surveys have been helpful in identifying issues such as preceptor’s workload, time/quality concerns, and compensation.<sup>5,6</sup> However, little has been reported on the types of student activities performed on IPPEs or perceptions of those precepting IPPEs.

While multiple programs have demonstrated successful IPPE models,<sup>2,3,7–15</sup> concern still exists across the profession that students in IPPE experiences are not utilized to their full potential due to lack of experiences that integrate the student into the health care team with a defined active role in the care of patients.<sup>16</sup> Internal discussion among members of the American College of Clinical Pharmacy (ACCP) Education and Training Practice Research Network (EDTR PRN) also suggested that IPPE students do not have a defined active role in the care of patients, and preceptors report a lack of time available for IPPE students, specifically in the health-system setting (unpublished data, 2011). In response to this discussion, the ACCP EDTR PRN developed a survey to identify barriers and possible solutions that colleges of pharmacy could employ to enhance the success of IPPEs in community hospital settings.

## Methods

The Scholarly Activity Committee of the ACCP EDTR PRN developed a 23-item web-based survey to assess hospital-based IPPEs occurring in health-systems where ACCP members practice (Appendix B). The electronic survey tool was developed using SurveyMonkey<sup>®</sup> software. The committee created a draft survey based on their collective experiences that was piloted by 32 members of the ACCP EDTR PRN and refined for content and clarity. Survey items are included in Tables 1–3. Respondents were allowed to select all responses that applied for each survey item, and each survey item included an opportunity for additional responses from individual responders. Respondents were asked to describe which approaches their pharmacy department has found to be particularly successful in providing IPPEs. The survey also included opportunity for individual responders to identify and comment on issues not addressed in the survey items. The primary areas the survey addressed were the perceived value of training IPPE students, the perceived obstacles for training IPPE students, and the characteristics of successful IPPE training approaches.

The project was deemed exempt by Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) at three of the institutions employing committee members. Investigators from other institutions where IRB approval was not sought completed training requirements and were approved as sub-investigators by one of the approving institutions.

ACCP PRNs whose members may practice in a hospital setting were invited to participate in the survey. The survey was available online to 1268 non-duplicated members of the participating PRNs during April 2012. Two reminders were distributed to improve the response rate. Responses were collected anonymously. Results of the survey were assessed through descriptive statistics using Excel 2010<sup>®</sup> and SurveyMonkey<sup>®</sup> software in June 2012.

Table 1  
Perceived value of working with IPPE students ( $n = 35$ )

Items of pharmacy department perceived value of working with IPPE students	Frequency <sup>a</sup>
Maintain positive relationships with area schools of pharmacy	28
Develop or improve relationships with area schools of pharmacy	19
Provide staff professionally rewarding experiences through working with students	19
Improve recruiting potential to fill resident pharmacist positions	11
Improve recruiting potential to fill staff pharmacist positions	9
Help with data collection for quality assurance projects	9
Improve recruiting potential to fill intern pharmacist positions	6
Maintain positive relationships with faculty member(s) in area schools of pharmacy	5
Develop or improve relationships with faculty member(s) in area schools of pharmacy	4
Improve recruiting potential to fill clinical pharmacist positions	4
Assistance with other projects—please specify in comments field	3
There is no value to the pharmacy department for providing IPPE	3

<sup>a</sup> Values add up to >35 as respondents could pick multiple activities.

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