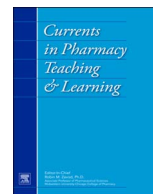




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# Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning

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Experiences in Teaching and Learning

## Motivations, career aspiration, and learning experience of students in the pharmacy program at Kuwait University: A tool to guide curriculum development

Abdelmoneim Awad\*, Asmaa Al-Haqan, Pierre Moreau

Kuwait University, Safat 13110, Kuwait

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** To determine students' motivating factors in the choice of pharmacy, career aspirations, and perceptions about learning experiences in the current pharmacy curriculum.

**Activity:** A descriptive cross-sectional survey of pharmacy students was performed at Kuwait University

**Findings:** The most common reason to pursue pharmacy was that they were not admitted to medicine or dentistry (40.5%). About half of students were seeing themselves employed in hospital pharmacies immediately after graduation. Over two-thirds of respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that the pharmacy program developed their problem-solving skills (78.5%) and improved their communication skills (66.4%). Students also admitted that the teaching staff seemed more interested in testing memorization (72.5%), that feedback on student work was usually provided in the form of grades (66.4%), and that the workload is putting a lot of pressure on them (88%).

**Summary:** The survey identifies key elements that needs to be improved in the next iteration of the program (entry-level PharmD).

### Background and purpose

Pharmacy education has been transformed dramatically over the last 20 years with the evolution of the practice philosophy from traditional tasks such as medication compounding and dispensing to a newer scope of practice including patient-centered care.<sup>1</sup> In June 2005, this evolution led to the expiration of the baccalaureate degree in pharmacy (BS Pharmacy) in the United States of America (USA), with a transition to the Doctor of Pharmacy degree (PharmD).<sup>2</sup> In contrast, baccalaureate degree programs remain the first professional degree to practice in most of the Middle Eastern countries.<sup>3</sup> Now, as there is an upsurge in the transformation of pharmacy practice from focus on dispensing medicines to becoming a patient-centered profession in this region, faculties of pharmacy started to switch their system of pharmacy education to match the entry-level PharmD curriculum in the USA.

The Faculty of Pharmacy of Kuwait University proposed a plan to start an entry-level PharmD program and pursue international review and accreditation after a visit by the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) delegation to Kuwait. It is a positive step in the right direction to graduate skilled and knowledgeable clinical pharmacists who can improve patient's health care. Hence, there is a demand to identify the key elements that needs to be improved in the next iteration of the program (entry-level PharmD). Students' input is crucial in the development of educational policies and practices since they are at the center of pre-

\* Corresponding author: Department of Pharmacy Practice, Faculty of Pharmacy, Kuwait University, P.O. Box 24923, Safat 13110, Kuwait. Tel.: +00965-24636065. E-mail addresses: [amoneim@hsc.edu.kw](mailto:amoneim@hsc.edu.kw) (A. Awad), [asmaa\\_h@hsc.edu.kw](mailto:asmaa_h@hsc.edu.kw) (A. Al-Haqan), [pmoreau@hsc.edu.kw](mailto:pmoreau@hsc.edu.kw) (P. Moreau).

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professional education. Students' perception of their curriculum have been discussed widely in the literature. Results from such studies provided recommendations to further improve the educational environment and recruitment strategies.<sup>4–6</sup> The paramount importance to survey students' learning experience was also highlighted in the "Moving On II" project of the International Pharmaceutical Federation using the FIPed-IPSF student learning experience questionnaire.<sup>7</sup>

The expanding role of pharmacists in today's society requires the enrolment of students who are able to accept the responsibility of providing direct patient care and to be more actively involved in their societies. Hence, it is crucial for our pharmacy program to identify students' motivation and career preferences. Several studies were conducted to identify factors that motivate students to choose pharmacy as their academic major. Studies from the USA reported that positive motivating factors include the prospect of having many career opportunities, of helping others, of receiving encouragement by family members, pharmacists or pharmacy students. Motivational factors also included career prestige and earning potential.<sup>8–10</sup> Studies investigated the career aspirations of graduating pharmacy students reported that most pharmacy students prefer a community-based or a hospital-based practice as their first career choice.<sup>3,11</sup>

The goals of this study were to identify students' motivating factors in the choice of pharmacy, their career aspirations, and to determine students' perceptions about their learning experience in the current pharmacy curriculum.

## Educational activity and setting

A descriptive, cross-sectional, survey of pharmacy students was conducted at the Faculty of Pharmacy of Kuwait University. The study population consisted of four different student cohorts from professional years (second, third, fourth, and fifth year), and consisted of a total of 194 students. The ethical clearance for this study was obtained from the "Human Ethical Committee, Health Sciences Center, Kuwait University".

The Faculty of Pharmacy at Kuwait University is the only public pharmacy school in Kuwait. It was established in 1996 and admitted its first cohort in September 1997. The Bachelor of Pharmacy (B.Pharm.) degree offered by the Faculty is a 10-semester program (total of 5 years) with the first two semesters spent in a common year with medical and dental students. Toward the end of this first year students are given the chance to elect their first, second, and third choice of the Faculty they wish to be admitted to through competitive application. During the first 3 semesters students enroll in pre-professional courses, followed by professional courses for the remaining 7 semesters. The Faculty's current curriculum is designed to foster students' abilities to communicate effectively, solve problems, make rational judgments based upon sound scientific reasoning; and engender a caring attitude in their professional interactions with patients.

The study questionnaire was adapted from validated surveys.<sup>7,12</sup> It was pre-tested for content, design, readability, and comprehension on 15 pharmacy students, and modifications were made as necessary so that the questionnaire was simple to understand, yet provided accurate data. The final version of the questionnaire had three sections, and contained both open-ended and close-ended questions. The first section included items to provide information about the characteristics of the respondents (Table 1). Section two consisted of nine questions to provide information about the students' motivating factors in the choice of pharmacy and their career aspirations. The first five questions were as follows: (i) Which of the following was the most important

**Table 1**  
General characteristics of respondents (n=85).

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	23	12.4
Female	162	87.6
<b>Age (years)</b>		
18–19	22	11.9
20–22	122	65.9
23–27	41	22.2
<b>Nationality</b>		
Kuwaiti	166	89.7
Non-Kuwaiti	19	10.3
<b>Year in Pharmacy School</b>		
2nd year	36	19.4
3rd year	49	26.5
4th year	56	30.3
5th year	44	23.8
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	160	86.5
Married	25	13.5
<b>Having children</b>		
Yes	13	7
No	172	93
<b>Having a close family member or a friend who is a pharmacist</b>		
Close family member	57	30.8
Family friend	86	46.5

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