



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/cptl

Experiences in Teaching and Learning

Design and short-term impact of an event to promote careers in clinical pharmacy

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Clinical pharmacy
Pharmacy organization
Pre-pharmacy students
Pharmacy students

ABSTRACT

Background and purpose: There is a role for local pharmacy organizations to promote clinical pharmacy and increase awareness to both potential and current pharmacy students. The Greater Milwaukee College of Clinical Pharmacy (GMCCP) chapter sought to promote clinical pharmacy amongst current and prospective pharmacy students to increase the knowledge, awareness, and interest in clinical pharmacy.

Educational activity and setting: Subcommittee members designed programming to introduce the basics of clinical pharmacy. Students from three schools of pharmacy and more than 40 colleges in the region were invited to the event. Didactic and discussion-based content was developed. Pharmacists from GMCCP were solicited as presenters, along with a current pharmacy student and resident. Participants were asked to complete pre-event and post-event surveys to assess their awareness of and interest in clinical pharmacy. Volunteer pharmacists were also surveyed after the event.

Findings: Twenty-eight individuals attended the event. Nineteen students completed both the pre- and post-survey. The comparison between median score pre- and post-event was analyzed with the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test. Students' awareness and knowledge of clinical pharmacy improved after attending the event. Students' interest in a career in clinical pharmacy also increased after attending the event. Nine of the thirteen volunteer breakout session pharmacists (69%) responded to the post-event survey. The majority strongly agreed that participants were interested in learning about their area of practice and asked meaningful questions appropriate for their area of practice.

Discussion and conclusions: The Exploring Careers in Clinical Pharmacy event increased awareness of clinical pharmacy career choices available within the profession of pharmacy. Local, regional, and national pharmacy organizations may consider utilizing the diverse talent of their membership and collaborate with colleges of pharmacy or other organizations to impact the knowledge, awareness, and interest in clinical pharmacy as a future career choice for pre-pharmacy and current pharmacy students.

Background and purpose

The practice of pharmacy has changed significantly in recent years. The advent of the doctor of pharmacy degree as the exclusive

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cptl.2017.11.006>

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professional degree needed to practice pharmacy in the United States as of 2000 brought with it anticipation and the expectation that the role of the pharmacist would transition from primarily a dispensing role to a more clinical role.¹ Clinical pharmacy, as defined by the American College of Clinical Pharmacy (ACCP), focuses on the science and practice of rational medication use.² Clinical pharmacists have in-depth knowledge of medications and patient care skills and per ACCP, “assume responsibility and accountability for managing medication therapy in direct patient care settings, whether practicing independently or in consultation/collaboration with other health care professionals”.³ Standards for the practice for clinical pharmacists have been developed and summarized by ACCP and address the clinical pharmacist's process of care and documentation as well as other professional responsibilities.⁴ Clinical pharmacists can practice in all health care settings, but their focus is specific to providing clinically-oriented patient care services and medication knowledge as opposed to providing a medication product. The expanding, clinical role of pharmacists has been gaining traction. It is becoming increasingly common for clinical pharmacists in the ambulatory care setting to provide medication therapy management or have collaborative practice agreements with providers to prescribe, evaluate, and monitor drug therapy for disease states such as diabetes, hypertension, and dyslipidemia. Likewise, it is becoming more common for clinical pharmacists in the inpatient setting to participate in medical emergencies, multidisciplinary rounds, or provide pharmacokinetic dosing services.^{5,6} However, despite the expanding role of pharmacists, the public, including students, remains relatively unaware of the role that clinical pharmacists play in health care; additionally, pharmacy students may be unaware of the variety of potential career options available within clinical pharmacy.⁷⁻¹¹

Initiatives to promote pharmacy practice vary within the various pharmacy professional organizations, but usually focus on the profession of pharmacy as a whole. For example, the American Pharmacists Association (APhA) has designated October as American Pharmacists Month, which encourages members to reach out to their community and use social media and other media outlets to promote the profession of pharmacy.¹² Also, the “*Pharmacy is right for me*” educational campaign was developed as a joint collaboration between the APhA and the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACCP) to “inspire and foster the next generation of pharmacy leaders in the United States”.¹³

Numerous studies have demonstrated the positive impact of clinical pharmacists on things such as patient outcomes, safety, and cost savings.¹⁴⁻¹⁷ However, very little has been done by professional pharmacy organizations to increase awareness of the important role of clinical pharmacists, specifically. ACCP has developed printable advocacy resources that provide information on clinical pharmacy, but more initiatives and collaborations amongst organizations are needed to communicate the role of clinical pharmacists and promote clinical pharmacy as a potential career path.¹⁸ One study examined the influences of pharmacy students' decisions to pursue a doctor of pharmacy degree and affirmed that “collaboration of pharmacy schools with college advisors, local pharmacy associations, and community pharmacies can also increase interest in the profession of pharmacy.”¹⁹ This study also demonstrated that most students were influenced to pursue pharmacy as a career as a result of encouragement from someone with whom they had a relationship, often a pharmacist or a pharmacy student.¹⁹ Therefore, additional collaborations and initiatives between clinical pharmacists and pharmacy students may be successful in increasing students' interest in clinical pharmacy and influencing them towards pursuing this career path. The use of pharmacy professional organizations to increase awareness of clinical pharmacy may also be of particular importance at a time when pharmacy schools are trying to be more creative and innovative in attracting quality applicants. An increased emphasis on clinical pharmacy may also broaden the appeal of pharmacy as a potential career choice by engaging students who are not as interested in the traditional dispensing role or are unaware of the various clinical roles for pharmacists.

While many pre-pharmacy and current pharmacy students may be familiar with the concept of clinical pharmacy, depending on the focus of their education and local opportunities there still may be some misconceptions or lack of familiarity regarding the variety of practice areas and functions for clinical pharmacists. Therefore, there is a potential role for local pharmacy organizations to increase prospective and current pharmacy students' knowledge, awareness, and interest in clinical pharmacy and to promote clinical pharmacy as a future career choice.

The Greater Milwaukee College of Clinical Pharmacy (GMCCP) is a non-profit, professional organization and an independent local chapter of ACCP that was established in 2014. GMCCP aims to provide continuing education, networking, and leadership opportunities to local pharmacists, as well as promote the advanced practice of clinical pharmacy in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. GMCCP sought to promote clinical pharmacy amongst current and prospective pharmacy students and to increase the knowledge, awareness, and interest in clinical pharmacy by highlighting career opportunities for advanced pharmacy practice in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The purpose of this article is to describe an event designed to promote clinical pharmacy, and evaluate the short-term impact of this promotion on its participants, so that other professional organizations can consider creating similar events. The Concordia University Institutional Review Board approved this study.

Educational activity and setting

GMCCP leadership is comprised of multiple committees, including the Student/Resident/Fellow (S/R/F) Committee. This committee is dedicated to facilitating pharmacy student, resident, and fellow engagement in the organization; it has members from multiple health-systems and a local school of pharmacy. Six S/R/F Committee members who were interested in the creation of a promotional event formed a subcommittee and met quarterly in person or via a conference call to discuss programming activities.

Members of the S/R/F subcommittee created a free event to describe and promote the practice of clinical pharmacy to both pre-pharmacy and current pharmacy students in the region. The group designed programming for the event to introduce the basics of clinical pharmacy in an interactive fashion and from multiple perspectives. The event was titled “Exploring Careers in Clinical Pharmacy.” After several discussions, an agenda (Fig. 1) was drafted that provided a balance of didactic and discussion-based content

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