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Healthy People 2020: assessment of pharmacists' priorities



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ABSTRACT

Objective: The purpose of this study was to assess perceptions of pharmacy educators on the priorities and roles of pharmacists in meeting the Healthy People 2020 objectives.

Study design: Cross-sectional, qualitative online national survey.

Methods: A comprehensive literature review identified documented roles and responsibilities of pharmacists in addressing the 42 topic areas in Healthy People 2020. From this, a 14-item survey was developed to identify priorities of categories to improve the health of the nation and importance of the pharmacist role to achieve the objectives. The survey was sent electronically to the members of the Public Health Special Interest Group of the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy in May and June 2014.

Results: Participants identified the following Healthy People 2020 categories as most important in improving the health of the nation: chronic diseases, health care services, lifestyle, prevention/well-being, and environmental factors. They identified the following Healthy People 2020 categories as possessing the most important roles for pharmacists in working to improve the health of the nation: chronic diseases, health care services, lifestyle, prevention/well-being, and infectious disease.

Conclusions: There exists great congruence between top categories of importance and those that the pharmacist can impact to improve the health of the nation. The results of this study can guide efforts to educate and activate pharmacists as interprofessional team members improving health locally and globally.

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Introduction

Pharmacists are trusted and accessible health professionals serving patients and populations in diverse communities and practice settings throughout the USA. There are currently over 290,000 pharmacists in the USA^{1–3} and that number is growing with almost 65,000 student pharmacists enrolled in 138 colleges and schools of pharmacy around the country.⁴ The USA is equipped with over 350,000 current or soon to be licensed pharmacists prepared to meet the needs of diverse patients and populations.

The role of the pharmacist as an integral member of the public health care team has been well recognized for many years. In 2006, the American Public Health Association published its policy statement on the role of the pharmacist in public health.⁵ Since that time, the US Public Health Service issued its report to the US Surgeon General on the roles of pharmacists in improving patient and health system outcomes.⁶ Similarly, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention published its guide on the opportunities for public health to partner with pharmacists in the prevention and control of chronic diseases.⁷

The Healthy People initiative began over 30 years ago and has guided national public health goals and indicators in the USA since that time.⁸ The pharmacists' stance to impact many public health needs has been well documented. Pharmacists are positioned to impact global health challenges^{9,10} including increased access to care through outreach to medically underserved and diverse communities.^{11–14} Infectious disease conditions are impacted by pharmacists addressing vaccine preventable diseases, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), and antimicrobial management.^{15–18} Furthermore, pharmacists play key roles in prevention and management of chronic diseases.^{19–22} Finally, pharmacists are leaders in emergency preparedness and response.^{23,24}

Pharmacy educators play a crucial role in preparing students to enter the practice environment ready to take on current and future professional challenges. They serve as critical leaders and change movers in the practice environment. Understanding their perspectives on the priorities and roles of pharmacists in meeting the Healthy People 2020 objectives will provide valuable information in moving forward the opportunities for pharmacists to meet public health needs of their communities. The Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) continues to promote the public health role of the pharmacist. ACPE produces standards which are used to assess programs that educate students in pharmacy, leading to the Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) degree.²⁵ In the latest revised ACPE 2016 Standards, the Center for Advancement of Pharmacy Education (CAPE) 2013 is referenced significantly and emphasizes the importance of population-based care and how it directly influences patient-centered care.²⁶ CAPE also recognized that pharmacists must function collaboratively with other health professions in an interprofessional team. Pharmacy educators need to be knowledgeable of areas where pharmacists can contribute to the health care of an individual or community not only to share as examples to students of the practice opportunities that await them after graduation but also to train them accordingly. If institutions of higher

learning focus training on yesterday's jobs, then students will expect to train and gain employment in yesterday's healthcare environment, not enhancing and improving the quality of care to individuals and communities.

This recognition goes beyond pharmacy education and led to the Interprofessional Education Collaborative (IPEC) being formed which purposely connects health professions to advance care. IPEC was formed back in 2009 when six national health education associations, including allopathic and osteopathic medicine, nursing, dentistry, pharmacy, and public health, came together in an effort to work collaboratively in helping prepare future health professionals for 'enhanced team-based care of patients and improved population health outcomes.'²⁷ Competencies were created to help educators develop curricula that take into account the interprofessional collaborative practice. Interprofessional education (IPE) has been defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) and occurs 'when students from two or more professions learn about, from, and with each other to enable effective collaboration and improve health outcomes.'²⁸ Faculty educators, practicing health professionals, and students need to understand what each health discipline can contribute to the care of a patient and community. IPE provides an opportunity for the student pharmacists to show how they move outside the sole role of medication distribution and into other areas of patient care. Healthy People 2020 is one of the many initiatives that will help advance IPE efforts and transition the pharmacist to utilize knowledge and apply skills learned in unique creative ways.

The purpose of this study was to assess perceptions of pharmacy educators on the priorities and roles of pharmacists in meeting the Healthy People 2020 objectives. The authors chose not to assess the perceptions of patients, the public, and other health care providers. As previously mentioned, there are many studies that do highlight the value a pharmacist provides in rendering clinical services. None specifically highlight pharmacists uniquely meeting Healthy People 2020 objectives. Other perceptions on the role of the pharmacist in meeting Healthy People 2020 objectives could be the focus of follow-up research from these authors or others in the field.

Methods

A national survey was conducted to assess pharmacy educators' perceptions on pharmacists' priorities of Healthy People 2020.

Survey instrument development

Members of the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP) Public Health Special Interest Group Development Committee (PH SIG DC) conducted a comprehensive literature review to identify currently documented roles and responsibilities of pharmacists in addressing the 42 topic areas in Healthy People 2020.

Based upon this initial assessment, it was recognized that an opportunity existed to identify current perceptions of pharmacy educators on the priorities and roles of

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