

IMPACT Abstract

Understanding and Addressing Gaps in Preparedness for Pharmacy Students' Transition to Practice

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One of the biggest challenges new graduates face is all the daunting new tasks of their profession, including challenges seen during the transitional period between student and beginning their professional career. The transition students face when beginning to practice as a pharmacist is known to be stressful and difficult, as many are not prepared for the realities of the profession.¹ There are many ways phrases used to describe this period and the challenges new graduates may encounter including “transition to practice”, “entry to practice”, “practice-ready”, and more.

Understanding areas where future pharmacists feel underprepared when beginning their transition to a professional position is important for many reasons. This process is said to be like “falling off a cliff into reality”.⁹ Most students are not prepared for what their real-life career has in store. Surveying students in this position can help educators and preceptors aid students' readiness in a more effective manner. The purpose of this study was to assess student knowledge of and confidence in tasks related to transitioning from a student to pharmacist.

An anonymous 37-item survey was developed based on previous literature and personal experiences of the investigator. The survey was designed with four main sections; Applying for the Job, Accepting the Job, Working the Job and Other, if it did not deem fit into any of the three prior categories.

The responses were recorded using a 4-point Likert scale: “agree”, “somewhat agree”, “somewhat disagree”, and “disagree”. At the end of each section, there was an open-ended short response question “If there is anything else you don't feel prepared for when [given topic], please put it here.” That question was followed by a multiple-choice question, “Would you be interested in additional information or training from the School of Pharmacy on these topics?”.

These findings can guide faculty, preceptors, and programs to develop just-in-time training and resources to aid students in their transition to practice. Helping students feel more confident during this transitional period not only helps shape a more well-rounded pharmacist, aid in their PIF, but also helps positively impact patient care. With more training and information available before this transition occurs, future pharmacists will be prepared to face all challenges they encounter.

Although academically prepared to become a pharmacist, an area students may not be as prepared for is the transition into their career. This survey was administered to gauge fourth year pharmacy students' readiness as they prepare to enter the work force. The evidence gathered showed the areas students feel they are most prepared for, and the areas students feel the least prepared for. It is important for faculty, preceptors, and students to be aware of pharmacy student's strengths and weaknesses to ensure the best transition for new pharmacists.