Pharmacy Interns’ Perceptions of Knowledge and Skills Required for Patient Care Services Delivery

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Background:
The transition from pharmacy intern to pharmacist can be challenging, even with the education and training provided through the pharmacy school curriculum. The role of the community pharmacist is expanding to include more patient care services, including immunizations and medication therapy management (MTM), so it is more important than ever to ensure pharmacy intern have the tools they need in order to provide high quality services once they enter practice. Studies have shown that student pharmacists who are involved in patient care services have increased confidence in providing patient care services, which may lead to an increase in the likelihood of providing high quality services once in practice.

Objective:
To identify pharmacy interns’ perceptions of knowledge and skills on how prepared they are to deliver patient care services, in a supermarket chain pharmacy.

Methods:
Pharmacy interns, aged 18 and older, employed in 52 Mid-Atlantic supermarket chain-pharmacies, were included in this prospective convenience sample study that was approved by the VCU Institutional Review Board. The survey was created based on input from a focus group of pharmacy interns. A thirty-nine question survey instrument was developed that evaluated intern perceptions of knowledge and skills related to patient care services, immunizations, medication therapy management, clinical queue, and point of care testing. Survey questions included 5-point Likert scale, dichotomous, multiple-choice, and an option to add additional comments. The survey was created in Qualtrics® and distributed to work email addresses. The survey was open for a period of twelve weeks. Reminder emails were sent every four weeks and the day prior to the end of the survey period. An email was also sent to the pharmacist-in-charge after four weeks to remind interns to complete the survey. Responses were gathered and stored in Qualtrics® and analyzed using SAS Version 9.4.

Results:
A total of 34 surveys were started for a response rate of 35%, with a 20% completion rate for all questions. The mean age of participants was 26.2 years (SD 4.1 years) and 70% were female. Eighty-eight percent of respondents completed the APhA Immunization Certificate Training and 45% completed the APhA Delivering Medication Therapy Management Services Certificate Training. Pharmacy interns who completed the APhA MTM training certificate course were more likely to agree with statements evaluating understanding (p=0.02) and confidence (p=0.09) in completing a comprehensive medication review (CMR) and were less likely to indicate a need for training (p=0.02). Pharmacy interns have a greater understanding and confidence in incorporating immunizations into workflow (both 85%, respectively). They also have a greater understanding and confidence in utilizing Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (ACIP/CDC) guidelines for immunization recommendations (90% and 85%, respectively). Pharmacy interns indicated they did not have as strong of an understanding and confidence level in providing other patient care services, including medication therapy management services, clinical queue, and point of care testing. Survey respondents indicated a desire for additional training in these areas.
Conclusion:
While pharmacy interns have a greater understanding of how to incorporate immunizations into pharmacy workload and utilize immunization guidelines, levels of understanding and confidence in providing other patient care services was not as strong. Future development of training for patient care services, as identified in the survey, may help to increase pharmacy intern understanding and confidence.

References: