

Chain Community Pharmacy: Staff

Background

As a general definition, a community pharmacy is defined as a “chain community pharmacy” if the organization consists of four or more stores. There are two general career paths in chain community pharmacy: staff and management. This profile focuses on staff, while management is discussed in a separate profile.

Community pharmacy is often seen as an excellent opportunity to conduct basic preliminary health assessments of patients. Quick evaluation of symptoms, laboratory values, and other indicators can be helpful in directing patients’ therapy, especially as the community pharmacists’ role in overall patient care continues to expand, such as by providing medication therapy management (MTM) services.

As a staff pharmacist in chain community pharmacy, 69% of time is used in the dispensing of prescription medications, which includes associated patient counseling. In addition, 5% of their time is spent in business management, such as ordering products and supplies, stocking shelves, and other tasks, often in conjunction with pharmacy technicians. This area of practice is growing with MTM development and implementation of such services in community settings. Finally, staff pharmacists spend a limited time (3%) in supervising or managing others, including pharmacy technicians.

As noted in the profile for Chain Community Pharmacy: Management, recent legislation that provides prescription drug coverage for those aged 65 years and older through Medicare Part D also provided challenges from a process and information standpoint as pharmacists try to assist patients in making informed decisions. With these new regulations, pharmacies have had to update computer systems, prescription processing, and the way they counsel and help their patients.

Characteristics

A total of 98 chain pharmacists responded to the survey with 57 of these respondents indicating that they are in staff positions. This profile is related to chain pharmacists in staff positions. Eighty-four percent reported having an entry-level pharmacy degree, with 42% having a PharmD degree. Five percent had obtained an advanced degree such as an MA, MS, MBA, PhD, or other. Nine percent had been through a residency, 16% had some type of certification, and 5% had completed some other type of training.

Respondents’ average age was 43 years old. More than half (60%) of respondents were female. Income data show 38% earn between \$80,000–\$100,000, while 40% earn \$100,000 or more per year. The average time worked per week was 38 hours. Respondents represented 34 states.

The majority of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with their work, with 20% indicating “extremely satisfied” and 44% indicating “somewhat satisfied.” Fourteen percent of respondents said that they felt the work was “extremely challenging” and 55% indicated it

was “somewhat challenging.”

Insider’s Perspective

What aspects of the job are most appealing?

A majority of chain community staff pharmacists (55%) indicated that “patient care/contact” was the most satisfying aspect of their work. A much smaller percentage (21%) indicated that the salary and benefits were appealing.

One North Carolina pharmacist summed up the feelings of many respondents by saying, “The satisfaction of working with patients both for prescriptions and OTC medications by far is one of the more satisfying aspects of this practice.”

What aspects of the job are least appealing?

In contrast to the most appealing aspects, 26% indicated that insurance issues were the least appealing aspect of their work. A respondent from Oregon stated that one of the most frustrating aspects is “dealing with insurance and patients with unrealistic expectations.”

Another from California wrote, “There is a lack of understanding [by] patients for the challenges in getting physician authorization or insurance authorization and the paperwork involved.”

Eleven percent stated “corporate and management issues” as the least appealing feature of their work.

What advice should students and practitioners consider when selecting the option of chain community staff pharmacist?

The most important factor cited by respondents (35%) was to consider that chain community staff pharmacists are working with the public, which has both an appealing and unappealing aspect. One respondent from Illinois stated that pharmacists need a “passion for dealing with people—communications skills are important, but liking people is essential.” Another chain staff pharmacist from North Carolina indicated that one should “determine what you are looking for in a position—if you would like to have long-term relationships with patients and families then community-based chain practice provides wonderful opportunities.”

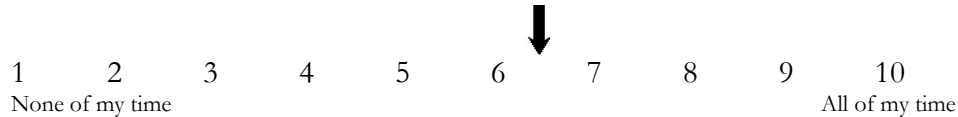
The second most important factor to consider (20%) is the hours that the pharmacy is open for operation and how many hours pharmacists are asked to work each day. One respondent from Colorado wanted all to “know that you will be on your feet all day!” Another from New Jersey added “it is common for 12 to 13 hour days regularly.”

Critical Factor Ratings

Interaction With Patients

Interaction with patients and the public was mentioned as one of the most satisfying aspects of chain community pharmacy. Whether it's talking with patients or communicating with a physician's office, working with people is one of the core characteristics of being a chain community staff pharmacist. Respondents indicated that they are in the mid-range related to the amount of time they interact with people.

$$= 6.4$$
$$\sigma = 2.1$$



Conducting Physical Assessments

Chain community staff pharmacists' level of involvement in conducting physical assessments depends on their position, the size of the pharmacy, and the corporate policy on clinical services.

$$= 1.7$$
$$\sigma = 0.9$$



Interpreting Laboratory Values

Taking into account the roles that community chain staff pharmacists have, there is little opportunity to interpret laboratory values for patients. Again, this can vary depending on the specific store in a chain and whether that store is involved in special projects or has an agreement with a specialty clinic to have access to this information. This is the lowest-rated critical factor by this group.

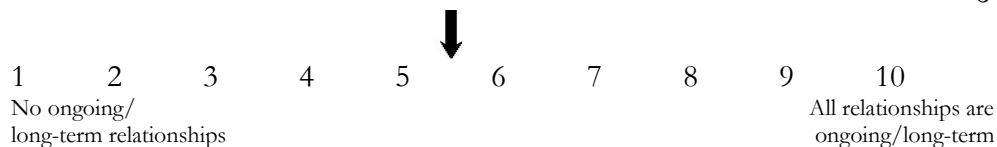
$$= 1.3$$
$$\sigma = 0.9$$



Continuity of Relationships

Chain community staff pharmacists have the opportunity to get to know their patients and other community health professionals on a personal level, especially since chain pharmacies may have regular clientele. They develop a working knowledge of the idiosyncrasies of their patients and their therapies. There are many pharmacists who would agree that this is key to their effectiveness in helping patients.

$$= 5.5$$
$$\sigma = 2.7$$



Focus of Expertise

Some career paths require a very specialized, very extensive degree of knowledge (e.g., a pharmacist specializing in neonatal care). However, as the respondents indicated with an average of 3.4, a broader more generalized focus of knowledge is required for chain community staff pharmacists. They are often looked to for advice on headache relief, treatment of minor injuries, diet choices, herbal medications, or even sunscreen recommendations among other areas.

= 3.4
 $\sigma = 2.2$



Innovative Thinking

Respondents rated innovative thinking in the mid-range at 3.5, indicating that their practice does not often require innovative thinking. Opportunities for idea generating in chain community pharmacy may include workflow streamlining or developing the marketing of pharmacy services.

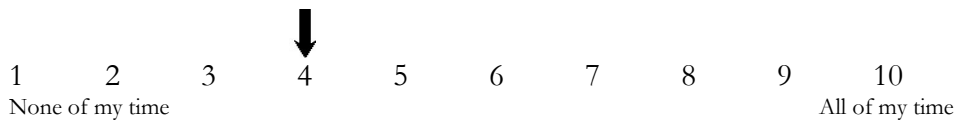
= 3.5
 $\sigma = 2.1$



Applying Scientific Knowledge

Community chain staff pharmacists have the opportunity to exercise the scientific knowledge they gained in pharmacy school about the medications they are dispensing and in helping their patients get well.

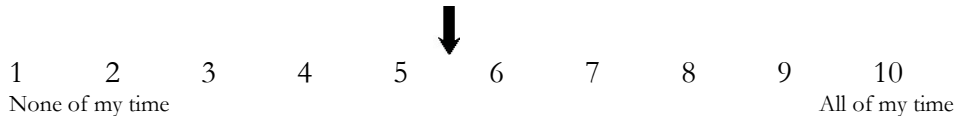
= 4.0
 $\sigma = 2.0$



Applying Medical Knowledge

Applying medical knowledge scored a slightly higher level than applying scientific knowledge, at a rating of 5.5.

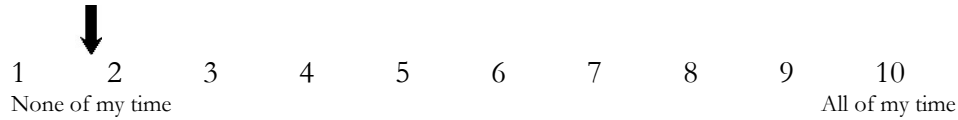
= 5.5
 $\sigma = 2.3$



Creating New Knowledge by Conducting Research

Chain community pharmacy is a prime example of a setting designed mostly for the application of learned knowledge versus creation of new knowledge. It is the arena where the results of pharmaceutical research and studies are used on a daily basis to improve patients' lives. There are some opportunities to conduct research in the chain community pharmacy setting, mostly in the realm of disease state management.

= 1.7
 $\sigma = 1.5$



Management/Supervision of Others

Not surprisingly, management/supervision of others scored mid-range for chain community staff pharmacists, at 4.7, in contrast to chain pharmacy managers, who rated this factor at 7.0. This critical factor had the third-largest difference compared with community chain pharmacy manager positions. However, when only one pharmacist is present at a time, the staff pharmacist does take on the responsibility of supervising other pharmacy staff.

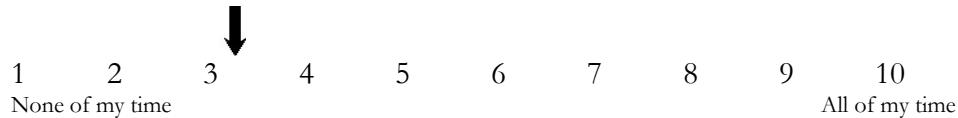
= 4.7
 $\sigma = 2.4$



Management/Supervision of a Business

In chain community pharmacy, the majority of classical management or supervision of business activities is the responsibility of the pharmacy manager or the district manager for the chain. Community chain staff pharmacists spend little time on business management. This factor had the second-largest difference compared with chain pharmacy management positions, where supervision of business rated 5.8. Staff pharmacists indicated that they spend 5% of their time on business management issues and just under 4% of their time on personnel management.

= 3.2
 $\sigma = 2.1$



Pressure/Stress

Chain community staff pharmacists indicated that they experience a high range of pressure or stress in their practice. One Texas respondent stated, “There is pressure to get prescriptions done in 15 minutes no matter how busy.” This was the second-highest rated factor for this group and the highest-rated factor across all profiles.

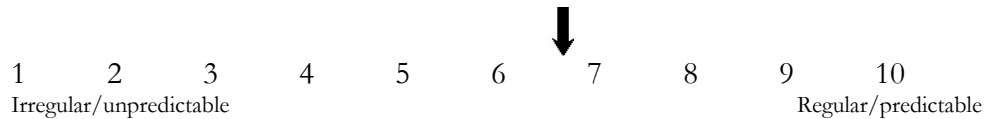
= 8.1
 $\sigma = 1.8$



Work Schedule

The predictability of work schedule received a rating of 6.8. Chain community staff pharmacists feel that they have a relatively regular or predictable work schedule from week to week.

= 6.8
 $\sigma = 2.9$



Part-Time Opportunities

Receiving a high mid-range rating in the survey at 7.6, respondents indicated that chain community pharmacy almost always offered the opportunity for part-time staff positions. With today’s pharmacist shortage, pharmacies are often looking for staffers to “fill in the gaps” in schedules and this offers an excellent opportunity for those pharmacists who either do not want to work full-time, or would like to pick up extra hours during their weekends or evenings. Chain staff pharmacists rated this factor the highest across all profiles.

= 7.6
 $\sigma = 3.1$



Job-Sharing Opportunities

Job-sharing received a low range response for staff pharmacists in the chain community pharmacy setting.

= 3.3
 $\sigma = 2.9$



Exit/Re-entry Opportunities

Exit/re-entry opportunities are high mid-range in this practice environment. Chain staff pharmacists rated this factor the highest across all profiles.

= 7.1
 $\sigma = 3.0$



Parental Leave Opportunities

Parental leave opportunities ranked 7.0 in this area of work-related options. Most chain community pharmacy companies provide the opportunity for parental leave. This depends somewhat on the size of the chain organization.

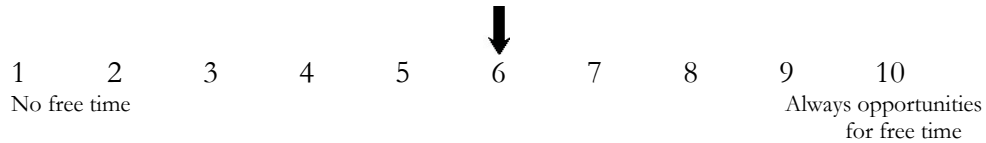
= 7.0
 $\sigma = 3.0$



Leisure/Family Time

With a work schedule that is more regular and predictable, chain community staff pharmacists are better able to plan for leisure time or time with their families. However, sometimes there is a long lead time required when requesting time off.

= 6.0
 $\sigma = 2.9$



Job Security

Community chain staff pharmacists agree that, on the whole, they enjoy adequate job security. This is due to the current national pharmacist shortage and continuing demand by an aging population for medications to treat their health problems. In addition, chain pharmacies continue to expand, which increases the demand for more pharmacists.

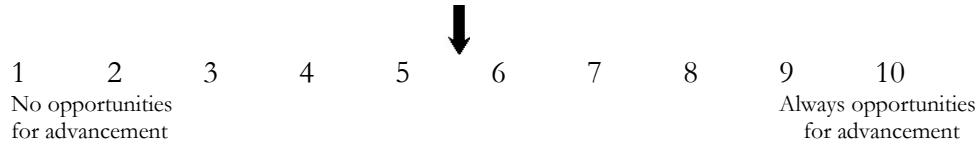
= 7.9
 $\sigma = 2.0$



Opportunities for Advancement

Staff pharmacists indicated a mid-range rating relative to the opportunities to advance within a chain. Career advancement can often be limited by the size of the organization. If a pharmacist works in a chain consisting of only four stores, there may not be the opportunity to go beyond pharmacy manager. However, in a larger chain, they may have more opportunities to choose the corporate ladder approach in their career.

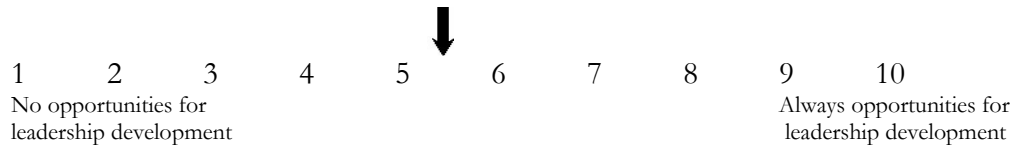
= 5.6
 $\sigma = 2.5$



Opportunities for Leadership Development

Leadership can be characterized by the possession of vision and initiative—vision to guide an individual or organization to a goal and initiative to take the steps necessary to get to that goal. These skills are often critical components of personal career development. In this survey, chain community staff pharmacists indicated that this factor fell in the mid-range area at 5.4.

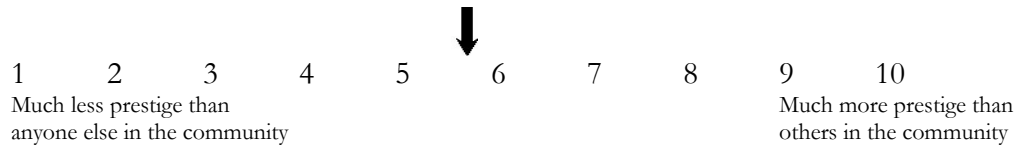
= 5.4
 $\sigma = 2.8$



Community Prestige

In community prestige, chain community pharmacy staff scored in the mid-range with a rating of 5.7. Community pharmacists often become well known in their community for helping individuals with health care. Often, pharmacists are looked to as confidants because they are a familiar face and a trusted health care professional in the community.

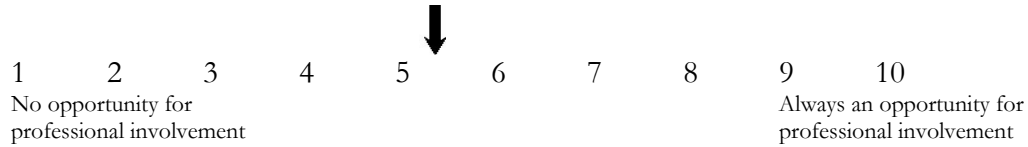
= 5.7
 $\sigma = 2.4$



Professional Involvement

Professional involvement of individual pharmacists is critical to the development of the pharmacy profession as a whole. Pharmacists need to communicate with each other so that the profession can continue to advance in providing optimum health care for the public. In this survey, chain community staff pharmacists reported a mid-range rating on the opportunity to be professionally involved in meetings and events.

= 5.3
 $\sigma = 3.0$



Income

As a result of the pharmacist shortage and demand in the job market, pharmacists are enjoying high salary rates in chain community pharmacy, even those fresh out of pharmacy school. Respondents indicated that they are in the upper mid-range of being properly versus not properly compensated for their professional services.

= 7.5
 $\sigma = 2.4$



Benefits (vacation, health, retirement)

Chain community staff pharmacists gave their benefits an even higher rating than their income in the survey. Staff pharmacists usually receive a benefits package that includes bonuses, health coverage, and retirement plans. This factor was rated one of the highest by this group of respondents.

= 8.6
 $\sigma = 1.7$



Geographic Location

As stated previously, the pharmacist shortage in certain areas of the country impacts this critical factor, thereby giving pharmacists a great deal of geographic versatility. Whether they want to relocate within their current company or try something new, the opportunity to relocate is available to them. The larger the chain corporation, the better the opportunity to relocate to a preferred part of the country.

= 7.6
 $\sigma = 2.8$



Autonomy

Autonomy in community pharmacy generally depends on whether the pharmacist works alone in the store or always works with another pharmacist or supervisor. One of the liberties of being a pharmacist in practice is that the pharmacist on duty has final say in most decisions that occurs under his or her supervision. Some decisions (mostly administrative) may require further consultation with either the pharmacy manager or the district manager. However, as seen in the survey, pharmacists rated this factor in the mid-range.

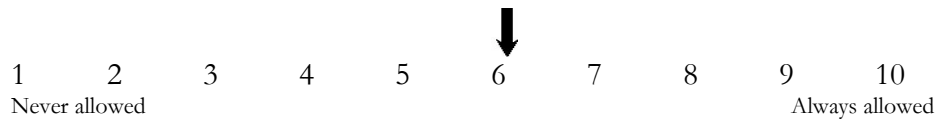
= 5.3
 $\sigma = 2.6$



Self-Worth

In general, the focus of chain community staff pharmacists is to help improve the lives of their patients through the use of prescription medications. Intrinsically, this act creates a great deal of self-worth and the feeling of accomplishment in the pharmacists' daily work.

= 6.1
 $\sigma = 2.6$



Future Focus

Some tasks in chain community pharmacy can be viewed as very immediately focused. Dispensing of prescription medications is a task focused more on "now" rather than "sometime in the future." However, staff pharmacists indicated that they have some opportunity to focus on the future with a score of 4.7.

= 4.7
 $\sigma = 2.5$



Professional Prestige

Professional prestige, to an extent, is related to the earlier factor on collaboration with other professionals. While the community pharmacist is typically limited to short telephone conversations with other health care providers, community pharmacists develop a reputation in their communities for providing thoughtful and thorough service, even if it's by telephone.

= 4.2
 $\sigma = 2.8$



Additional Training

To practice in community pharmacy, pharmacists must maintain their pharmacy license through achieving CE credits. The number of CE hours required varies from state to state. It may not take up a great deal of time, but it is a necessary component of being a *practicing* community pharmacist. Community residencies also can provide the opportunity to design and implement new patient care programs and services. Staff pharmacists rated this the highest factor along with the benefits they receive.

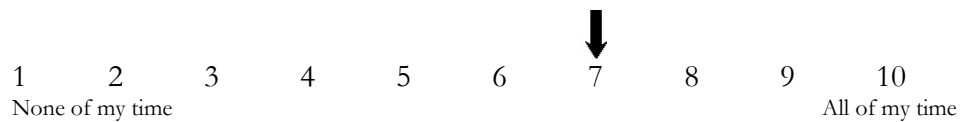
= 8.6
 $\sigma = 2.7$



Interacting With Colleagues

As one would suspect, chain community staff pharmacists interact with coworkers on a daily basis.

= 7.0
 $\sigma = 2.7$



Travel

Chain community staff pharmacists for the most part have lower needs to travel for their day-to-day activities.

= 2.3
 $\sigma = 2.1$



Writing

Respondents were in the low range regarding writing. In chain community pharmacy, staff pharmacists usually do not have to file reports, which are handled by the manager of the pharmacy. This was one of the lowest-rated factors by this group.

= 1.4
 $\sigma = 0.8$



Working With Teams

Notably, this factor provided the greatest difference in rating between chain managers, who rated this factor at 6.7, and staff, who rated this factor at 3.7. In larger organizations, the staff pharmacist does not work with many team members outside the pharmacy itself.

$$= 3.7$$
$$\sigma = 3.4$$



“On Call”

Respondents indicated a low “on call” need for the positions. Specific project activities may require an “on-call” status but these are not commonplace.

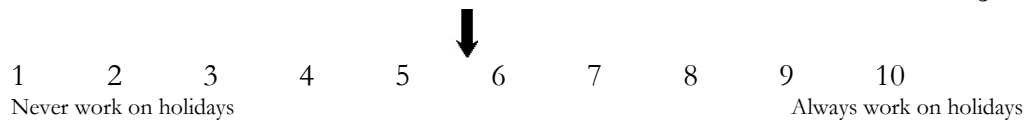
$$= 1.8$$
$$\sigma = 1.9$$



Work on Holidays

Staff pharmacists rated this factor mid-range. Many stores are open for some holidays and a few chains are open 365 days a year.

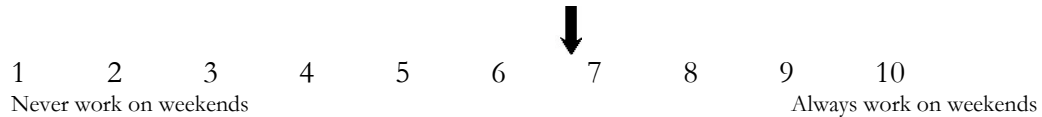
$$= 5.6$$
$$\sigma = 2.7$$



Work on Weekends

This is similar to the above statement, although more work is required on weekends versus holidays. Most chain community staff pharmacists alternate every other weekend. Larger volume stores may have fewer weekend hours because there are more pharmacists to cover these shifts. Chain community staff pharmacists had the highest rating for this factor across all profiles.

$$= 6.8$$
$$\sigma = 2.0$$



Presentations

Presentations ranked in the low range. While many do not give presentations, others who are involved with colleges of pharmacy may provide occasional presentations to student pharmacists.

$$= 1.6$$
$$\sigma = 1.5$$



Mean Scores for Critical Factors

| | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Interaction With Patients | 6.4 |
| 2. Conducting Physical Assessments | 1.7 |
| 3. Interpreting Laboratory Values | 1.3 |
| 4. Continuity of Relationships | 5.5 |
| 5. Helping People | 6.1 |
| 6. Collaboration With Other Professionals | 3.1 |
| 7. Educating Other Professionals | 2.1 |
| 8. Variety of Daily Activities | 3.9 |
| 9. Multiple Task Handling | 8.3 |
| 10. Problem Solving | 4.0 |
| 11. Focus of Expertise | 3.4 |
| 12. Innovative Thinking | 3.5 |
| 13. Applying Scientific Knowledge | 4.0 |
| 14. Applying Medical Knowledge | 5.5 |
| 15. Creating New Knowledge by Conducting Research | 1.7 |
| 16. Management/Supervision of Others | 4.7 |
| 17. Management/Supervision of a Business | 3.2 |
| 18. Pressure/Stress | 8.1 |
| 19. Work Schedule | 6.8 |
| 20. Part-Time Opportunities | 7.6 |
| 21. Job-Sharing Opportunities | 3.3 |
| 22. Exit/Re-entry Opportunities | 7.1 |
| 23. Parental Leave Opportunities | 7.0 |
| 24. Leisure/Family Time | 6.0 |
| 25. Job Security | 7.9 |
| 26. Opportunities for Advancement | 5.6 |
| 27. Opportunities for Leadership Development | 5.4 |
| 28. Community Prestige | 5.7 |
| 29. Professional Involvement | 5.3 |
| 30. Income | 7.5 |
| 31. Benefits (vacation, health, retirement) | 8.6 |
| 32. Geographic Location | 7.6 |
| 33. Autonomy | 5.3 |
| 34. Self-Worth | 6.1 |
| 35. Future Focus | 4.7 |
| 36. Professional Prestige | 4.2 |
| 37. Unique Practice Environment | 2.5 |
| 38. Advanced Degree | 2.2 |
| 39. Entrepreneurial Opportunity | 2.3 |
| 40. Additional Training | 8.6 |
| 41. Interacting With Colleagues | 7.0 |
| 42. Travel | 2.3 |
| 43. Writing | 1.4 |
| 44. Working With Teams | 3.7 |
| 45. "On Call" | 1.8 |
| 46. Work on Holidays | 5.6 |
| 47. Work on Weekends | 6.8 |
| 48. Presentations | 1.6 |

Reference

Schommer JC, Brown LM, Sogol EM. *Career Pathway Evaluation Program 2007 Pharmacist Profile Survey*. June 2007.

Professional Organizations

American Pharmacists Association (APhA)
1100 15th Street NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20005
Tel: 800-237-APhA Fax: 202-783-2351
www.pharmacist.com

National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS)
413 North Lee Street, Alexandria, VA 22313
Tel: 703-549-3001
www.nacds.org

National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA)
205 Daingerfield Road, Alexandria, VA 22314
Tel: 703-683-8200 Toll-Free: 800-544-7447 Fax: 703-683-3619
www.ncpanet.org

National Pharmaceutical Association (NPhA)
107 Kilmayne Drive, Suite C, Cary, NC 27511
Tel: 800-944-NPhA Fax: 919-469-5870
www.npha.net

Retail Industry Leaders Association (RILA)
1700 North Moore Street, Suite 2250, Arlington, VA 22209
Tel: 703-841-2300
www.retail-leaders.org

NOTE: For further pharmacy organization information, please visit the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy Web site at www.aacp.org and click on the “Related Pharmacy Organizations” link.