

Managed Care Outpatient Pharmacy

Background

Pharmacists employed by managed care organizations are responsible for a broad and diversified range of clinical, quality-oriented, drug management services. Pharmacists in managed care strive to provide the highest quality drug therapy management for the members in a plan, while considering the pharmacoeconomic implications for the entire group of patients. Most pharmacists in managed care work for health plans and pharmacy benefit management (PBM) companies. They perform a wide array of critical tasks that allow individual patients to get the appropriate drug at the right time in a convenient, cost effective manner. Pharmacists in managed care perform a variety of functions, including drug distribution and dispensing, patient safety monitoring, clinical program development, business operations, analysis of therapeutic outcomes, and cost management.

Managed care pharmacists have diverse responsibilities in the health care system. According to respondents, 24% of their time is spent on medication dispensing (including associated patient counseling), 23% is spent on business/organization/department management, and 11% is spent on personnel management.

Notably, the managed care environment is rather diverse and a pharmacist might work with a local group of patients or with patients from across the country.

Characteristics

Thirty-two managed care pharmacists responded to the 2012 *APhA Career Pathway Evaluation Program* survey. Eighty-eight percent held a bachelor of pharmacy degree, 6% had a post BS PharmD, and 12% had an entry level PharmD degree. Sixty-four percent indicated an advanced degree (MA, MS, MBA, PhD, or other). Twenty-nine percent had been through a residency program and 40% had been through certificate training.

Respondents' average age was 50 years old. Just over half (53%) of respondents were female. Income data show that 19% earn less than 100,000, while the rest earn \$100,000 or more per year. Thirteen percent earn more than \$150,000. The average time worked per week was 43.4 hours.

Respondents indicated that they were satisfied with their work, with 55% indicating "extremely satisfied" and 36% indicating "somewhat satisfied." Similarly, most respondents indicated that they felt the work was quite challenging, with 52% indicating "extremely challenging" and 42% indicating "somewhat challenging."

Insider's Perspective

What aspects of the job are most appealing?

Responses to this question were highly variable, showing that there are many favorable aspects to working in a managed care outpatient setting. One pharmacist said that they

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enjoyed “working in a managed care setting [where] I have the opportunity to interact with clinicians. It is a more clinical feel than retail.” Several did comment on the advantage of working closely to the physicians in the managed care organization. One pharmacist said that they enjoyed having “freedom to apply change and efficiency.”

One respondent, in a leadership position within the organization, said, “As an Executive, I am thrilled to work in an integrated, non-profit, delivery system with our own physicians.”

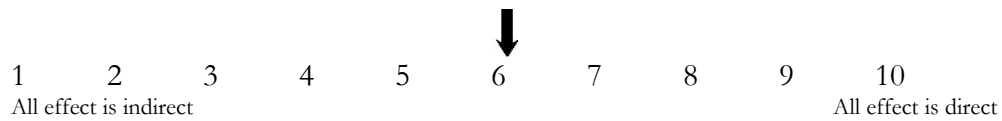
What aspects of the job are least appealing?

Several respondents commented that the salary in this setting is lower than in others; one respondent said: “Salary is 10 to 20% less competitive than market although benefits long term is superior.” Other respondents mentioned the managerial burden and budgeting process as unappealing aspects of the work.

What advice should students and practitioners consider when selecting the option of managed care pharmacy?

Many respondents recommended considering further education and training if considering a job in this role. One said that it would be helpful to become a Certified Diabetic Educator, another recommended two years of residency and BPS Certification, and still another said to consider getting work experience in another setting before moving into the managed care outpatient pharmacy setting. One respondent said to consider that the “pay is lower than traditional retail, but quality of life is better.”

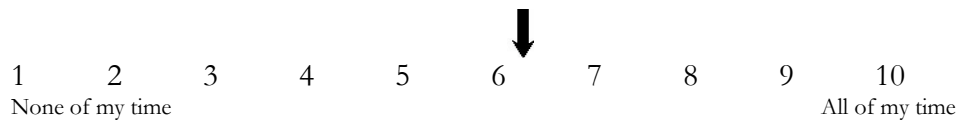
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Collaboration with Other Professionals

Most managed care pharmacists sought out this practice setting because of the desire to help patients and this hinges on collaboration of health care professionals with this common goal. Physicians, nurse, and managed care pharmacists must work together to communicate accurately to ensure optimal drug therapy.

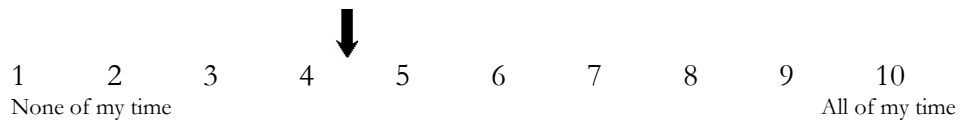
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Educating Other Professionals

Typically, these pharmacists serve as the medication expert in a managed care pharmacy setting. It is important that they educate their fellow practitioners about safe and effective medication use. While this may not take up a great deal of time, in-service training is a valued function performed by pharmacists.

= 4.4



Variety of Daily Activities

Because of the nature of the managed care environment, each day brings additional challenges and responsibilities. Many pharmacists find this myriad of possibilities exciting and enjoy the diversity in activities.

= 5.2



Multiple Task Handling

In order to ensure the timely and accurate dispensing of prescriptions in a managed care pharmacy, especially a large volume pharmacy, a pharmacist is often required to handle multiple tasks at the same time. This could include answering patient questions, receiving physician calls, checking filled prescription orders, and evaluating insurance problems. Time management skills are very important for the managed care pharmacist.

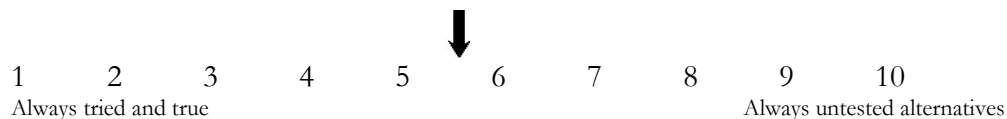
= 7.0



Problem Solving

In this setting, pharmacists must use their knowledge for the managed care system to solve problems. Managed care pharmacists may have to adhere to a formulary system when making decisions using a prescribed drug product in each therapeutic category. Pharmacists must handle a variety of problems, including drug utilization review, generic substitution, and patient counseling. For the most part, respondents tend to use previous solutions that fit within the parameters of their organization's policies and procedures.

= 5.6



Focus of Expertise

As mentioned above, managed care staff pharmacists must possess specific knowledge of managed care policies and procedures. They must be highly familiar with drug benefit design, prescription filling procedures, and prior authorization mechanisms. Managed care pharmacists also can focus on specific disease management programs, such as a diabetes screening/education clinic or an asthma clinic to improve overall patient outcomes within the managed care system.

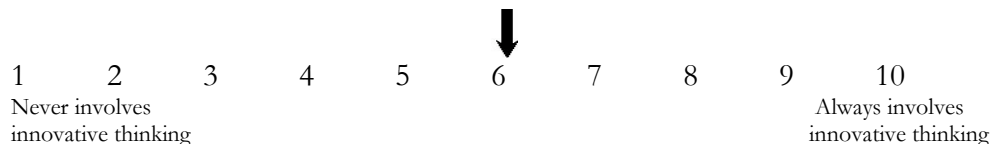
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Innovative Thinking

Managed care staff pharmacists must develop innovative ways to provide therapy for an entire patient population in the most cost effective way to benefit the managed care organization and the employer. This may require new ways of providing care keeping in mind the overall goal of the organization.

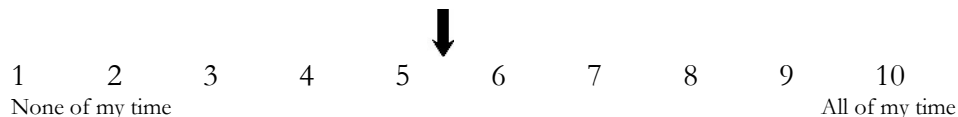
= 6.1



Applying Scientific Knowledge

Pharmacists in managed care practice must apply specific knowledge to improve patient outcomes within the managed care organization. Application of scientific knowledge rated a score of 5.4.

= 5.4



Applying Medical Knowledge

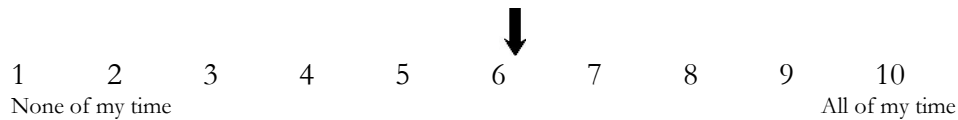
Pharmacists in managed care practice apply medical knowledge to a greater extent than

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scientific knowledge. This knowledge is used to improve patient outcomes within the managed care organization and can include patient counseling, physical assessment, drug therapy reviews, collaboration with other professionals, and other applications.

= 6.2



Creating New Knowledge by Conducting Research

There are limited opportunities for research in managed care pharmacy. For example, outcomes research is very helpful in designing or refining formularies or drug therapy protocols. However, creating new knowledge by conducting research is not considered a large portion of the practice profile for managed care pharmacists as oftentimes researchers are brought in to conduct studies.

= 2.4



Management/Supervision of Others

Besides the obvious responsibilities of pharmacy managers, staff pharmacists also manage the support staff within the pharmacy while they are on duty.

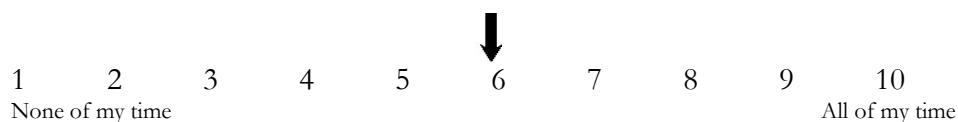
= 6.3



Management/Supervision of a Business

Pharmacists in managed care outpatient pharmacies are fairly involved in the business side of the operation. This may include managing the drug spend and other aspects of operations.

= 5.9



Pressure/Stress

Many managed care staff pharmacists recognize the stress and pressure associated with this practice setting. Prior authorization, formulary changes, and other economic factors can influence how pharmaceutical care is provided.

= 6.8



Work Schedule

The predictability of the work schedule tied for the third-highest score in this group with a rating of 7.7. Managed care staff pharmacists feel that they have a relatively regular and predictable work schedule. This allows pharmacists to plan their lives further in advance and make the most of a consistent schedule.

= 7.7



Part-Time Opportunities

As mentioned in the previous factor, most managed care pharmacists work a consistent schedule; however, there are some opportunities for part-time employment similar to other practice sites.

= 4.7



Job-Sharing Opportunities

There is little to no opportunity for job-sharing in managed care as indicated by the low range rating of 1.8.

= 1.8



Exit/Re-entry Opportunities

Exit/re-entry opportunities are low mid-range for this group with a rating of 3.8.

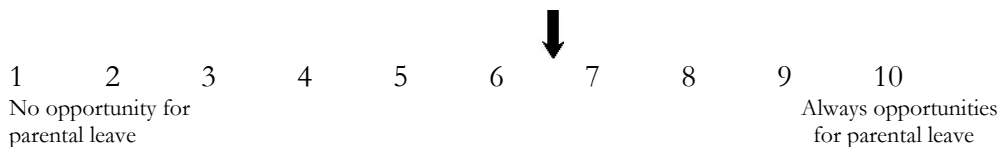
= 3.8



Parental Leave Opportunities

Managed care pharmacists have adequate opportunity for parental leave.

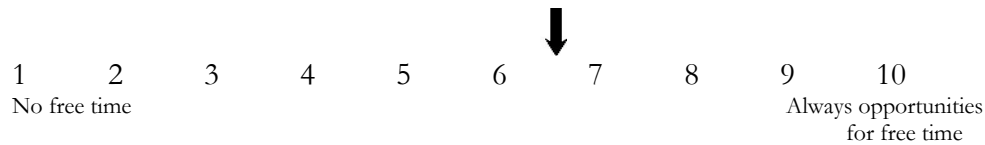
= 6.6



Leisure/Family Time

With a consistent work schedule, managed care staff pharmacists can avail themselves of extra time to participate in leisure/family activities.

= 6.6



Job Security

Managed care pharmacists benefit from enhanced job security due to their experience in the field. They have unique training and experience in this area and they feel their jobs are secure.

= 6.8



Opportunities for Advancement

Several opportunities for advancement exist in managed care pharmacy, including management positions or benefit design. Those pharmacists with the knowledge and skills to advance should express their interest early in their managed care careers.

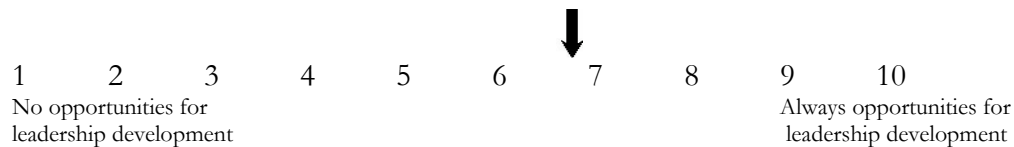
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Opportunities for Leadership Development

Leadership roles in managed care pharmacy exist for those who have a specific interest. Membership in professional associations enhances leadership possibilities for managed care pharmacists.

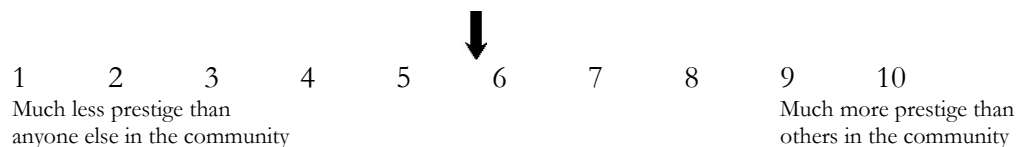
= 6.8



Community Prestige

The spiraling cost of health care delivery in this country has contributed to a negative stereotype of the managed care system. Some of the community prestige is tied to the employer and their work in the community.

= 5.8



Professional Involvement

Professional involvement of individual pharmacists is critical to the development of managed care pharmacy. Pharmacists are involved in every aspect of the medication use process and they often consult other health care professionals on the best course of drug therapy management. Managed care pharmacists may choose to be involved in a number of local, state, and national professional organizations.

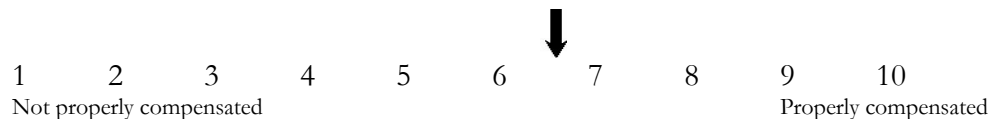
= 7.5



Income

Pharmacists in managed care environments rated this factor at 6.6, indicating that they feel properly compensated for their work.

= 6.6



Benefits (vacation, health, retirement)

Receiving the highest rating in the profile at a high range (8.4), respondents indicated that they liked their benefits. Many managed care organizations are able to offer competitive benefit packages to potential employees. By their very nature as health providers, they offer some of the highest-rated benefits.

= 8.4



Geographic Location

Managed care organizations are in every state in the nation and offer a variety of career paths, internships, and fellowships for students as well as opportunities for pharmacists looking to work in the field. By and large, managed care staff pharmacists feel they can practice in a wide variety of geographic areas in the United States.

= 3.8



Working Remotely

A portion of a managed care pharmacists work may be done remotely. Some aspects of the job such as project planning or data analysis could potentially be done from home.

Travel

Respondents for the most part have lower needs to travel for their day-to-day activities. However, attending state, national, or international meetings provides some travel opportunities.

= 2.4

**Writing**

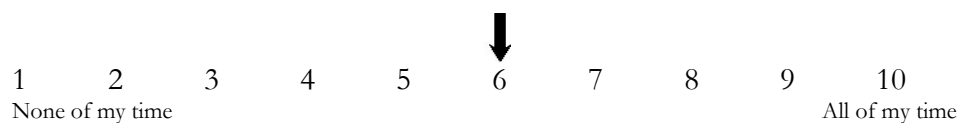
Respondents were in the lower range regarding writing.

= 3.4

**Working With Teams**

Respondents indicated working with teams as a higher mid-range response with a rating of 6.0. This makes sense because they are able to work with the primary care physician so closely.

= 6.0

**Mean Scores for Critical Factors (and standard deviations)**

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 1. Interaction with people | 5.5 (2.9) |
| 2. Performing physical assessments | 1.7 (1.8) |
| 3. Interpreting laboratory values | 2.4 (1.2) |
| 4. Continuity of relationships | 5.4 (2.9) |
| 5. Extent to which effect is direct | 6.1 (2.9) |
| 6. Collaboration with other professionals | 6.2 (2.2) |
| 7. Educating other professionals | 4.4 (2.2) |
| 8. Variety of daily activities | 5.2 (2.8) |
| 9. Multiple task handling | 7.0 (3.0) |
| 10. Problem solving | 5.6 (1.6) |
| 11. Focus of expertise | 4.6 (2.6) |
| 12. Innovative thinking | 6.1 (2.7) |
| 13. Applying scientific knowledge | 5.4 (2.4) |
| 14. Applying medical knowledge | 6.2 (2.8) |
| 15. Creating new knowledge by conducting research | 2.4 (2.1) |
| 16. Managing others | 6.3 (2.9) |
| 17. Managing business operations | 5.9 (3.0) |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 18. Pressure/Stress | 6.8 (2.0) |
| 19. Work schedule | 7.7 (2.7) |
| 20. Part time opportunities | 4.7 (3.7) |
| 21. Job sharing | 1.8 (1.7) |
| 22. Exit and re-entry | 3.8 (2.5) |
| 23. Parental leave | 6.6 (3.5) |
| 24. Free time for leisure/family activities | 6.6 (2.4) |
| 25. Job security | 6.8 (2.1) |
| 26. Opportunities for advancement | 5.4 (2.9) |
| 27. Opportunities for leadership development | 6.8 (3.3) |
| 28. Community prestige | 5.8 (2.2) |
| 29. Professional involvement | 7.5 (2.7) |
| 30. Income | 6.6 (2.4) |
| 31. Benefits (vacation, health, retirement) | 8.4 (1.9) |
| 32. Geographic location | 3.8 (3.2) |
| 33. Working Remotely | 3.0 (2.7) |
| 34. Autonomy | 6.3 (2.2) |
| 35. Self-Worth | 6.2 (2.5) |
| 36. Future focus | 5.7 (2.7) |
| 37. Professional prestige | 5.1 (2.5) |
| 38. Unique practice environment | 7.3 (2.5) |
| 39. Advanced degree | 3.3 (2.6) |
| 40. Entrepreneurial opportunity | 2.9 (3.0) |
| 41. Additional training | 4.8 (2.8) |
| 42. Interacting with co-workers | 8.0 (2.2) |
| 43. Travel | 2.4 (1.9) |
| 44. Writing | 3.4 (2.1) |
| 45. Working with teams | 6.0 (2.1) |

Reference

Schommer JC, *APhA Career Pathway Evaluation Program for Pharmacy Professionals 2012 Pharmacist Profile Survey*. February 2013

Professional Organizations

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