

Managed Care

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. A Tennessee respondent supported this diversity by highlighting the “global nature of managed care pharmacy.”

Managed care pharmacists have diverse responsibilities in the health care system. Twenty-eight percent of their time is spent on patient care services (e.g., medication therapy management, disease management), 13% is spent on data management, and 11% is spent on dispensing medications, including the associated patient counseling. Ten percent of their time is spent on each of the following: business/department management, project management, and health professional consulting.

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. An Oregon respondent stated feeling the “ability to improve the outcomes for millions of patients.”

Characteristics

Nineteen managed care pharmacists responded to the 2007 *APhA Career Pathway Evaluation Program* survey. Seventy-three percent held an entry-level pharmacy degree, with 10% having a PharmD degree. Sixty-three percent indicated an advanced degree (MA, MS, MBA, or PhD). Sixteen percent had been through a residency program and 11% had been through certificate training.

Respondents' average age was 42 years old. Just under two thirds (63%) of respondents were female. Thirty-seven percent indicated some type of management role. Income data show that 36% earn between \$80,000–100,000, while the remainder earn \$100,000 or more per year. Nine percent earn more than \$170,000. The average time worked per week was 42 hours. Respondents represented 6 states.

Respondents indicated that they were satisfied with their work, with 47% indicating “extremely satisfied” and 48% indicating “somewhat satisfied.” Similarly, most respondents indicated that they felt the work was quite challenging, with 31% indicating “extremely challenging” and 53% indicating “somewhat challenging.”

Insider's Perspective

What aspects of the job are most appealing?

Thirty-two percent of the managed care pharmacists indicated that the flexibility of the schedule was the most appealing aspect of their work. An additional 26% indicated that patient care was one of the most appealing aspects.

A respondent from Kansas found “drug product selection for large populations of patients” an appealing aspect of the work. Another from Maryland highlighted that “schedule, use clinical knowledge, and lots of patient contact” are appealing aspects.

What aspects of the job are least appealing?

The lack of face-to-face patient contact was the least appealing part of their job listed by 16% of managed care pharmacists responding to the survey. The same percentage (16%) stated “management and administration” as the least appealing aspects.

An Alaska pharmacist indicated concern for “micromanagement.” A Maryland respondent discussed that the role is “patient contact mostly by phone.”

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

Managed care pharmacy is a dynamic area of practice, particularly with the rising cost of health care and the constant challenges to provide cost effective pharmaceutical care. A respondent from Kansas stated it plainly, “You need strong clinical and business skills to be successful in [this] work setting.” A Wisconsin respondent wanted those who were looking into careers in managed care to remember that managed care pharmacists “work with the public and insurance companies.” Finally, a respondent from Texas stated, “You must have the ability to work both independently and as part of a team.”

Continuity of Relationships

Managed care pharmacists have the opportunity to get to know their patient populations. They are typically employees of the managed care organization that is responsible for providing care for a specific group of patients. However, this depends on the pharmacists' role. If they working within the managed care health facility, they have a better opportunity to see longer relationships than those who work at a corporate office or from home.

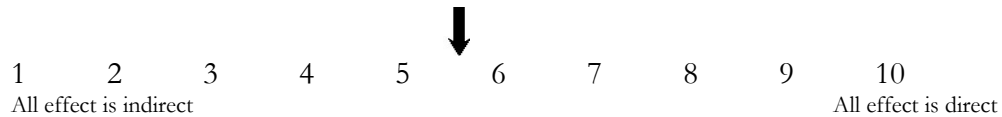
= 3.7
 $\sigma = 2.9$



Helping People

Pharmacists, by nature of their profession, enjoy helping others. This is consistently rated a high score in all pharmacy career paths. Managed care pharmacists help people by working as a member of a managed care organization team. Their impact is split as indicated with the mid-range rating of 5.6.

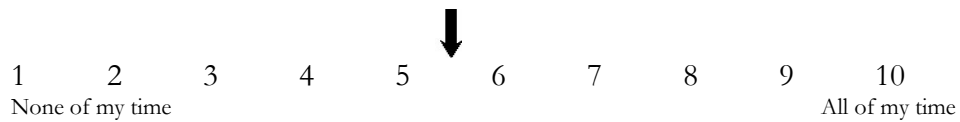
= 5.6
 $\sigma = 3.2$



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.

= 5.5
 $\sigma = 2.3$



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.

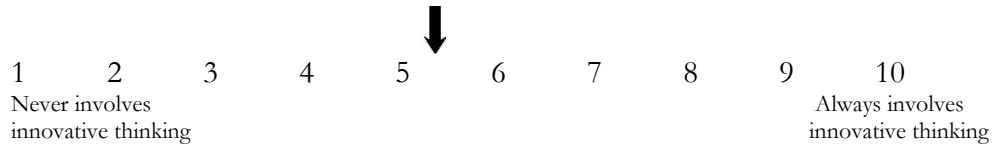
= 3.7
 $\sigma = 2.4$



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.

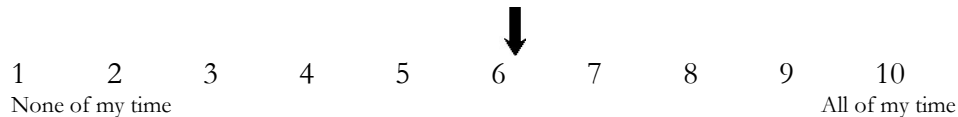
= 5.3
 $\sigma = 3.0$



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 6.1.

= 6.1
 $\sigma = 2.3$



Applying Medical Knowledge

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

= 7.1
 $\sigma = 1.9$



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.

= 2.8
 $\sigma = 2.0$



Management/Supervision of Others

Respondents indicated that they are in the low range with regard to management/supervisions of others. While this may be the case across all respondents, pharmacy managers have responsibility for all pharmacy staff members.

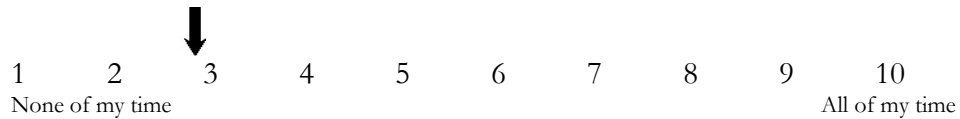
= 3.1
 $\sigma = 2.6$



Management/Supervision of a Business

Because of the nature of the business, there are limited opportunities for pharmacists in management of the overall business. However, pharmacy managers do have responsibility for the pharmacy business.

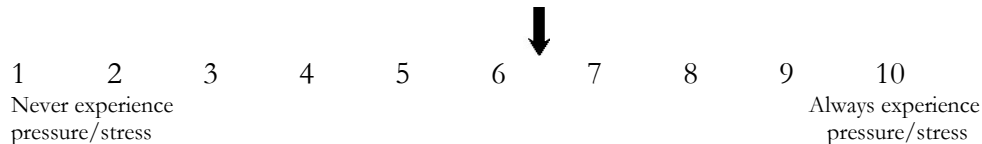
= 2.8
 $\sigma = 2.7$



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. One respondent put it this way, "Everything is someone else's emergency."

= 6.4
 $\sigma = 2.3$



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
 $\sigma = 2.8$



Part-Time Opportunities

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

= 2.6
 $\sigma = 2.9$



Job-Sharing Opportunities

There is little to no opportunity for job-sharing in managed care as indicated by the low range rating of 1.4.

= 1.4
 $\sigma = 0.5$



Exit/Re-entry Opportunities

Exit/re-entry opportunities are low mid-range for this group with a rating of 3.6.

= 3.6
 $\sigma = 2.3$



Parental Leave Opportunities

Tied for the third-highest rating in the profile at 7.7, managed care pharmacists have opportunities provided to them for parental leave.

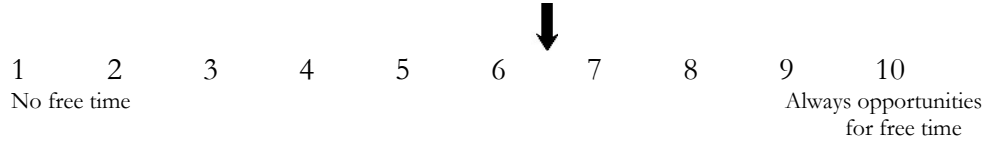
= 7.7
 $\sigma = 3.2$



Leisure/Family Time

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

$$= 6.5$$
$$\sigma = 2.1$$



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. The nationwide shortage of pharmacists and high demand to fill positions also favorably impacts job security.

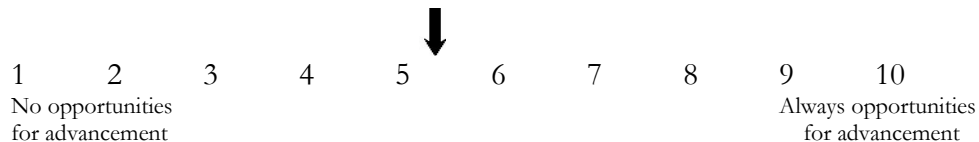
$$= 7.1$$
$$\sigma = 2.6$$



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.

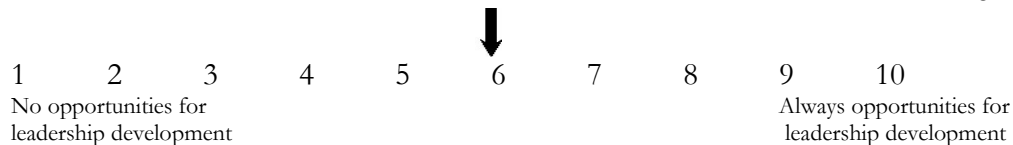
$$= 5.3$$
$$\sigma = 3.0$$



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.

$$= 5.9$$
$$\sigma = 3.2$$



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.

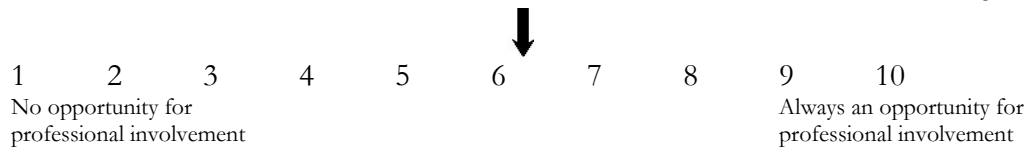
= 5.1
 $\sigma = 2.1$



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.

= 6.2
 $\sigma = 3.1$



Income

Pharmacists in managed care environments rated this factor at 7.1, indicating that they feel properly compensated for their work.

= 7.1
 $\sigma = 2.5$



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
 $\sigma = 1.4$



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.

= 6.2
 $\sigma = 3.5$



Autonomy

Autonomy in managed care community pharmacy in general can depend on whether the pharmacist works alone or always works with another pharmacist or supervisor. One of the liberties of this practice is that the pharmacist on duty has final say in most decisions that occur under his or her supervision. Some decisions (mostly administrative) may require further consultation with either the pharmacy manager or another supervisor.

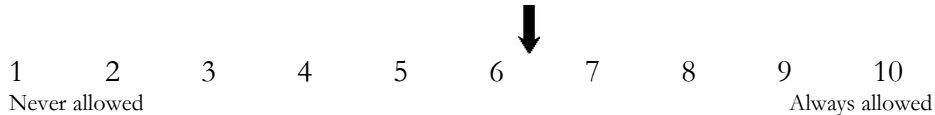
= 5.6
 $\sigma = 3.4$



Self-Worth

Pharmacists in managed care believe their practice setting provides the opportunity to create personal value and positive outcomes. They are respected members of interdisciplinary teams that provide care for specific patient populations.

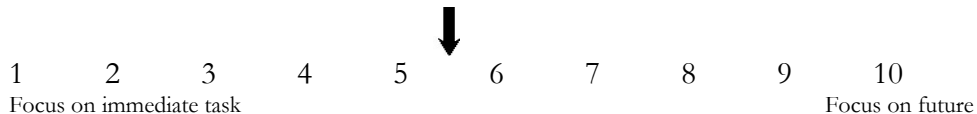
= 6.3
 $\sigma = 2.9$



Future Focus

The nature of managed care staff pharmacy, with its focus on the immediate needs of the patient, means it is more focused in the present than the future. Daily tasks require the pharmacist's attention and take priority. Some long-term focus and planning is required some of the time, as indicated by the 5.5 rating.

= 5.5
 $\sigma = 2.7$



Professional Prestige

Professional prestige, to an extent, is related to the earlier rating on professional involvement. Participating in professional organizations is one way that pharmacists become well known or gain prestige within the profession. Managed care pharmacy provides some opportunities for staff pharmacists to gain professional prestige.

= 4.8
 $\sigma = 3.2$



Unique Practice Environment

Managed care pharmacists practice in a variety of managed care settings, including staff model health maintenance organizations (HMOs), group model HMOs, preferred provider organizations (PPOs), point of service (POS) plans, and others. Managed care pharmacy's focus on cost effectiveness within a defined patient population is more unique than in other dispensing-focused practice settings.

= 7.2
 $\sigma = 2.3$



Advanced Degree

Typically in managed care community pharmacy, an advanced degree is required only if the individual chooses to pursue management positions in the organization. While advanced degrees are not required, many of these pharmacists have some type of advanced degree.

= 4.4
 $\sigma = 3.8$



Entrepreneurial Opportunity

Entrepreneurial opportunity is limited for managed care pharmacists, who gave this factor a rating of 2.7.

= 2.7
 $\sigma = 2.8$



Additional Training

While advanced degrees may not be required, this factor was rated the second highest in the profile. New advances occur in managed care pharmacy on a regular basis and it is important to keep up with the growing knowledge base. Additional training is often sought by pharmacists as evidenced by their participation in residency, certificate, and other training programs.

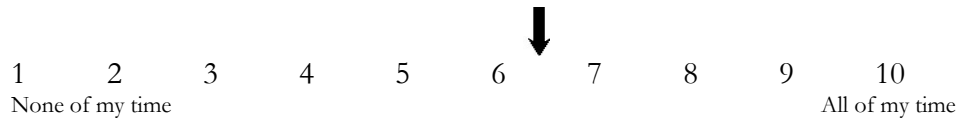
= 8.3
 $\sigma = 3.1$



Interacting With Colleagues

Respondents indicated that they tend to interact with coworkers on a regular basis.

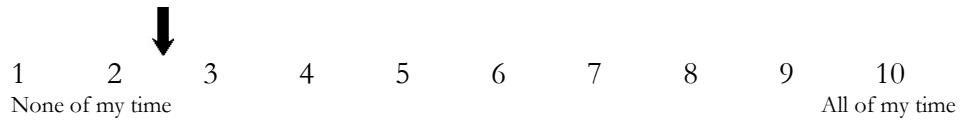
= 6.4
 $\sigma = 3.0$



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.

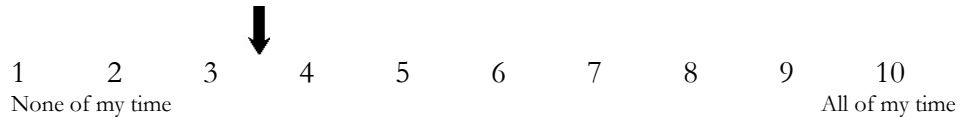
= 2.5
 $\sigma = 1.8$



Writing

Respondents were in the lower range regarding writing.

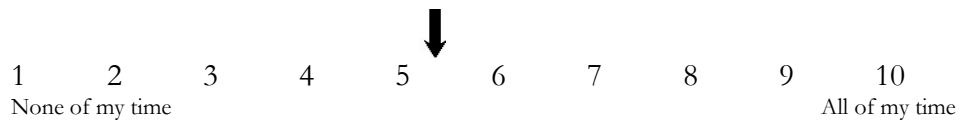
= 3.4
 $\sigma = 1.9$



Working With Teams

Respondents indicated working with teams as a mid-range response with a rating of 5.3.

= 5.3
 $\sigma = 3.2$



“On Call”

Respondents indicated a low “on call” need for the positions.

= 2.1
 $\sigma = 2.8$



Work on Holidays

Managed care pharmacists rarely work on holidays.

= 1.8
 $\sigma = 2.0$



Work on Weekends

Managed care respondents indicated that they work on weekends more often than on holidays, but were still in the low range of ratings for this factor.

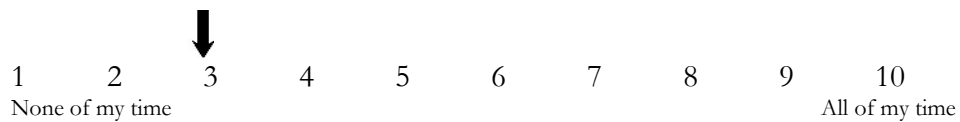
= 3.2
 $\sigma = 2.8$



Presentations

Managed care pharmacists indicated that they occasionally provide presentations. These can be an in-service training program, presentations at meetings, or presentations for upper management of the organization.

= 2.9
 $\sigma = 2.1$



Mean Scores for Critical Factors

| | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Interaction With Patients | 4.2 |
| 2. Conducting Physical Assessments | 1.3 |
| 3. Interpreting Laboratory Values | 1.9 |
| 4. Continuity of Relationships | 3.7 |
| 5. Helping People | 5.6 |
| 6. Collaboration With Other Professionals | 5.5 |
| 7. Educating Other Professionals | 3.7 |
| 8. Variety of Daily Activities | 6.2 |
| 9. Multiple Task Handling | 5.7 |
| 10. Problem Solving | 4.9 |
| 11. Focus of Expertise | 4.9 |
| 12. Innovative Thinking | 5.3 |
| 13. Applying Scientific Knowledge | 6.1 |
| 14. Applying Medical Knowledge | 7.1 |
| 15. Creating New Knowledge by Conducting Research | 2.8 |
| 16. Management/Supervision of Others | 3.1 |
| 17. Management/Supervision of a Business | 2.8 |
| 18. Pressure/Stress | 6.4 |
| 19. Work Schedule | 7.7 |
| 20. Part-Time Opportunities | 2.6 |
| 21. Job-Sharing Opportunities | 1.4 |
| 22. Exit/Re-entry Opportunities | 3.6 |
| 23. Parental Leave Opportunities | 7.7 |
| 24. Leisure/Family Time | 6.5 |
| 25. Job Security | 7.1 |
| 26. Opportunities for Advancement | 5.3 |
| 27. Opportunities for Leadership Development | 5.9 |
| 28. Community Prestige | 5.1 |
| 29. Professional Involvement | 6.2 |
| 30. Income | 7.1 |
| 31. Benefits (vacation, health, retirement) | 8.4 |
| 32. Geographic Location | 6.2 |
| 33. Autonomy | 5.6 |
| 34. Self-Worth | 6.3 |
| 35. Future Focus | 5.5 |
| 36. Professional Prestige | 4.8 |
| 37. Unique Practice Environment | 7.2 |
| 38. Advanced Degree | 4.4 |
| 39. Entrepreneurial Opportunity | 2.7 |
| 40. Additional Training | 8.3 |
| 41. Interacting With Colleagues | 6.4 |
| 42. Travel | 2.5 |
| 43. Writing | 3.4 |
| 44. Working With Teams | 5.3 |
| 45. "On Call" | 2.1 |
| 46. Work on Holidays | 1.8 |
| 47. Work on Weekends | 3.2 |
| 48. Presentations | 2.9 |

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 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

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.