Association Management

Background

A large number of pharmacists serve as volunteers in a variety of pharmacy-related professional (individual members) and trade (company members) associations—either as officers (elected) or as committee members (appointed). A smaller but still substantial number of pharmacists choose association management as a career pathway, turning their pharmacy background, experience, and leadership skills into a challenging, full-time career. There are many functional areas found within the scope of pharmacy association management including government relations, clinical education, professional development, and professional advocacy.

Today, more than 151,000 associations exist in the United States, representing nearly every industry, profession, charity, hobby, cause, and interest. There are associations at the local, state, regional, national and international levels. (Source: http://library.dialog.com/bluesheets/html/bl0114.html#AB. Accessed April 30, 2013.)

Pharmacy has many national, state, and local associations. “Broad spectrum” associations, representing all pharmacists, such as the American Pharmacists Association, exist at the national level and in all 50 states. Narrower, special-interest organizations of pharmacists (e.g., representing various practice areas) exist at the national level and to a lesser degree at the state or local levels. Virtually all such organizations have pharmacists employed within their full-time professional management team, frequently including the chief executive officer.

Recognizing the need to educate pharmacists for careers in association management, the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) began an Executive Residency in Association Management in 1968. Other pharmacy associations began residencies and fellowships in the 1990s and those currently offering programs include the American Pharmacists Association Foundation, the National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS), and the National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA), the Academy of Managed Care Pharmacists (AMCP), and the Pharmacy Quality Alliance (PQA). The American Pharmacists Association (APhA) also offers APPE rotations and internship opportunities.

Characteristics

Forty pharmacists identified themselves in this category in the 2012 APhA Career Pathway Evaluation Program survey. Forty-six percent hold a PharmD degree up significantly from 2007 when only 16% of respondents had either an entry level or post baccalaureate PharmD. Thirty-eight percent indicated they had an advanced degree (MA, MS, MBS, PhD, or other), while 42% had been through a residency program. In addition, 38% had been through a certificate program and 11% reported completing other training. Such additional education might be outside the field of pharmacy, as would be the case in attaining Certified Association Executive status from the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE).
Nearly all respondents indicated that they were satisfied with their job with 75% indicating “extremely satisfied” and 20% indicating “somewhat satisfied.” Similarly, the respondents said that they felt the job was very challenging with 52% indicating “extremely challenging” and 43% indicated they felt the job was “somewhat challenging.”

Respondents’ average age was 45 years old. More than half (58%) of the respondents were male. Income and hours worked per week is highly variable in this field. Fifteen percent reported incomes less than $100,000 and 33% reported greater than $150,000. The average time worked per week was 44.5 hours with a standard deviation of 16.

**Insider’s Perspective**

**What aspects of the job are most appealing?**
Associations offer a number of programs and services to their members and the public, including professional education meetings, public information and education, codes of conduct/ethics, professional and safety standards, and/or the development of statistical information that are heavily depended upon by businesses and government. This diversity of scope is reflected by respondents, with 52% stating that the most appealing aspect of the position is diversity of the work. Forty-three 43% cited the ability to “advocate on behalf of the profession” and “influence public policy” as the most appealing aspect of association management.

**What aspects of the job are least appealing?**
No one single factor was listed by the respondents as a least appealing feature of the position. Both the amount of travel and long hours were each cited by several of the respondents as the least appealing aspects they see. Other comments such as “continuous e-mail,” “demanding workload,” and “long time away when traveling” were frequently repeated.

**What advice should students and practitioners consider when selecting the option of association management?**
Many of the respondents recommended that pharmacists have prior practice experience if contemplating a career in pharmacy association management. Communication skills were cited as being vitally important for this field. Several indicated that those considering this field need the ability to be self-starters and to multitask.
Critical Factor Ratings

Interaction With People (Patients and Other Members of the Public)
Association management pharmacists spend little time interacting with patients individually but do spend some time interacting with the public in general. This varies tremendously depending on what part of the organization the pharmacist is employed. Some projects are tied closely to patient care and public policy while others are not.  

\[= 5.6\]

Conducting Physical Assessments
Not surprisingly, this group of pharmacists spends a minimal amount of time conducting physical assessments since direct patient contact is not a large component of this area of practice. This factor is tied for the lowest numerical valuation of any of the critical factors for these respondents. 

\[= 1.1\]

Interpreting Laboratory Values
As noted above, because of the low percentage of time spent in direct patient contact, association management pharmacists spend little to no time interpreting laboratory values. This factor ties with the above factor as the lowest ranked for this group. 

\[= 1.1\]

Continuity of Relationships
Continuity of relationships ranked in the mid-range for association management pharmacists. This continuity may not refer to patients per se, but rather to ongoing relationships with others in pharmacy or with association management outside the field of pharmacy. Many of the relationships formed are project driven. 

\[= 5.6\]

Helping People
These respondents indicated a higher level of indirect assistance to people rather than direct assistance. This is not surprising given the low amount of direct clinical responsibility as a function of the position. Association managers do help people—most often the group’s

© 2013 by the American Pharmacists Association. All rights reserved.
APhA Career Pathway Evaluation Program for Pharmacy Professionals – pharmacist.com
members—indirectly by the education, public policy, research, and other activities undertaken on their behalf. One respondent stated, “If you want to have direct [individual] impact, association management is not the place to work.”

= 2.6

Collaboration With Other Professionals
Collaboration with other professionals ranked higher on the scale at 5.2. This reflects the need for association management pharmacists to interact with representatives of medicine, nursing, and other fields in exploring public policy issues. Working with legislative and regulatory staff professionals also comes into play.

= 5.6

Educating Other Professionals
A portion of time committed to educating other professionals is indicated in this survey response. This may reflect association managers’ efforts to gain understanding of pharmacy’s positions on public policy issues with other special interests and with public policymakers. Six percent of the respondents’ time is spent advising/counseling health care professionals.

= 5.1

Variety of Daily Activities
Respondents identified variety of daily activities as an important facet of association management. Simply put by one respondent, “[W]e work on a] variety of issues.” Repetitiveness is not an issue in this practice environment.

= 8.5

Multiple Task Handling
Perhaps even more than variety, multitasking is a major feature of association management as indicated by the high rating in the survey response. The inability to control outside political factors is undoubtedly involved, but the nature of the position lends itself to surprises, leading to multiple simultaneous tasks. In a typical day, an association manager may be working toward a publication deadline, meeting planning, responding to new issues or member inquiries, as well as other duties. The ability to focus on the priority task can be an ever-present challenge.
### Problem Solving
A tendency toward solving problems by untested methods is used more often than past methods. Given the wide variety of issues addressed and programs and services offered, it is common for association managers to find innovative solutions. One Michigan respondent summed a number of these factors by stating that pharmacists in association management “must be able to work independently, multitask, and problem solve efficiently.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always one activity at a time</th>
<th>Always several tasks at a time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Focus of Expertise
The amount of generally defined versus sharply defined expertise leaves these respondents precisely mid-range. Because of the wide variety of issues, programs, and services, part of an association management career requires a broad set of skills and expertise. Some association positions, however, may be more specialist than generalist, for example a public policy director or meeting planner.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always tried and true</th>
<th>Always untested alternatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Innovative Thinking
Association management pharmacists lean heavily toward the need for innovative thinking as a component of their jobs. Generating new ideas within the profession of pharmacy is a mainstay of the field, according to these data. Again, the variety of professional and public issues that association managers must deal with requires innovative thinking and new approaches. This group rated this factor the highest for all profiles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never involves innovative thinking</th>
<th>Always involves innovative thinking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Applying Scientific Knowledge
Applying scientific knowledge received a mid-range score of 4.9. Association managers may find that their basic pharmacy education is useful background, underpinning their daily functions in management, meeting planning, public education, and writing.
Applying Medical Knowledge
The same information holds true for this group of respondents as it applies to applying medical knowledge, which also received a mid-range score of 4.9.

Creating New Knowledge by Conducting Research
This factor ranks as one of the lowest in time demand for association management pharmacists. The exception may be some staff specialist positions that are responsible for tracking trends and conducting industry research. The typical association management professional may not find the need for a significant commitment to engage in a research activity.

Management/Supervision of Others
Response to this factor depends on the nature of the position and whether the pharmacist is in a management or staff role. Those in management positions supervise others, although compared with the other critical factors and comments, many positions are self-motivating and self-directed. In addition, with the continual change of projects, supervision may change quickly from personnel issues to project task issues.

Management/Supervision of a Business
Not surprisingly, more than half of an association manager’s time is devoted to management and supervisory activities. Management of a business (or project) differs from the above factor in amount of time spent in this role. Twenty-eight percent of the respondents reported business/organization/department management as the activity performed most often. Adding in project/case management time, this rises to over half of the workweek at 51%.
Pressure/Stress
Association management pharmacists report experiencing a high level of pressure and stress in their work with an upper range score of 7.4. Related factors (e.g., workload, frequent shortage of resources) may be likely contributors. The political pressures of professional leadership responsibilities also may contribute to stress in these positions. One respondent from Virginia stated that stress can occur and association managers must “be ready to multitask with little staff backup.”

= 6.8

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never experience pressure/stress Always experience pressure/stress

Work Schedule
Association managers report their work between predictable and unpredictable with a rating of 5.4. This may reflect the different types of positions held within the association environment as well as seasonal variations (e.g., during active legislative sessions, near annual meeting time).

= 5.3

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Irregular/unpredictable Regular/predictable

Part-Time Opportunities
Relatively little opportunity for part-time employment of pharmacists in this field exists with a score of 4.0. Variations exist among national, state, and local associations. Many state or local specialty associations cannot support a full-time executive and either hire a part-time pharmacist or contract with an association management firm.

= 2.9

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
No opportunity for part-time employment Always opportunities for part-time employment

Job-Sharing Opportunities
Job-sharing is not a common practice in associations, which is reinforced by the low ranking of this factor.

= 2.7

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
No opportunity for job-sharing Always opportunities for job-sharing

Exit/Re-entry Opportunities
Exit/re-entry opportunities are mid-range in this practice environment.
Parental Leave Opportunities
Parental leave opportunities ranked higher than others in the areas of work-related options. Most associations provide the opportunity for parental leave when possible.

Leisure/Family Time
Association management pharmacists are able to enjoy a relative amount of free time for family and personal activities. Satisfactory scheduling of personal time seems manageable.

Job Security
Job security of association management pharmacists was ranked at 8.4 on the likert scale. While chief executives in this field usually hold employment contracts, they are employed by a board of directors with many members. As the board's composition changes, so can the group's priorities and their assessment of the chief executive's position. Overall, job security is still relatively high, reflecting the fact that most staff members do not report to volunteer boards but serve as employees.

Opportunities for Advancement
Association management pharmacists reported a mid-range level of opportunities for advancement. Generally speaking, state and local level pharmacy associations are not large organizations when compared with the national associations where greater opportunities exist for advancement. One Washington, DC, respondent indicated, “Association management provides a career ladder from entry-level positions through senior management and executive leadership.”
Opportunities for Leadership Development
At 8.0, association managers report ample opportunities for leadership development with near unanimity. This may not be surprising, given association management pharmacists are, almost by definition, in positions of leadership within the profession. In addition, many national associations provide leadership development to its members, thereby providing this service to staff as well.

= 8.3

Community Prestige
Association managers enjoy a high level of respect within the community for the positions they hold. In part, this may be due to their visibility within the community, for example in legislative and public affairs, as well as their relationships with other association managers outside the field of pharmacy.

= 7.3

Professional Involvement
Far and away with the highest-level response (9.6) for this group, association management pharmacists report ample opportunity for professional involvement. Pharmacy meeting attendance is more than an opportunity—it’s a requirement of the position! State and national association gatherings, inter- and intra-professional opportunities, and association management seminars are among areas of involvement. This factor was rated the highest by this group across all profiles.

= 9.2

Income
Respondents indicated that they are above the mid-range of being properly versus not properly compensated for their professional services. As a general rule, salaries of entry-level association positions are less than those of entry level-pharmacist positions in more traditional careers.

= 7.5
Benefits (vacation, health, retirement)
Often directly linked to income or salary, benefits scored higher than income with association management pharmacists. However, benefits differ from local to state to national associations.

= 8.1

Geographic Location
Association managers face some geographic limitations depending on the type of association that employs them. Many association headquarters are concentrated in areas where policymakers are—Washington, DC—or large cities—Chicago. In addition, state associations tend to be located near the state capitol. The mid-range rate indicates that some employment opportunities are limited while others have location choices.

= 3.6

Working Remotely
Respondents answered midrange for this question about working remotely. For some association management pharmacists, all of their work can be done remotely and for others only some can be done outside of the office. This will depend on the position and on the organizations openness to these types of arrangements.

= 5.5

Autonomy
Highly autonomous is the rating association managers designate for this career pathway, meaning that they are given wide latitude in decision making. Within these broad limits, the association manager has high autonomy and independence to make decisions on behalf of the association. One Michigan respondent stated that pharmacists in these positions “must be able to work independently.”

= 7.2

Self-Worth
Association management provides growth opportunities, leading to advancement of self-worth. This evaluation may be closely linked to similar ratings in professional involvement, leadership development, and prestige.
Future Focus
Association management is primarily a future-focused career. Because they interact to a large degree with pharmacy thought leaders, association management pharmacists are always trying to anticipate the profession’s issues in tomorrow’s context. They gather information, work with the volunteer board and committee members to formulate strategy, and have a high degree of autonomy in its implementation. Future focus was scored the highest by this group across all profiles.

Professional Prestige
Respondents enjoy a high level of prestige both within pharmacy and in other public arenas. The political realities and public spotlight create a crucible that not many pharmacists would find comfortable, therefore they hold those in esteem who can stand up to such pressures.

Unique Practice Environment
As the third-highest score among this group (9.0), respondents identify their practice as a highly unique environment. There may be only one association management practice setting in many, if not most, states. Coupled with the high degree of autonomy, these practitioners also have the ability and the opportunity to mold their practice environment, further enhancing the uniqueness.

Advanced Degree
The 5.1 response indicates a mid-range view of the necessity of an advanced degree. The issue may be whether an advanced degree is required or merely desirable.
Entrepreneurial Opportunity
Entrepreneurial opportunity ranks in the mid-range among association management pharmacists. Since associations are, for the most part, nonprofit organizations and are “owned” by the pharmacist members, there is little ownership opportunity in the traditional sense.

Additional Training
Most respondents indicated that other training (e.g., association management) may not be a job requirement but may be highly desirable, as noted earlier in opportunities for development. This is especially true given the unique nature of the job and the wide variety of activities it contains.

Interacting With Colleagues
Association management pharmacists indicate that they interact with colleagues often. This reflects the interaction that occurs on specific projects and the need for multiple people to be involved in special functions such as annual meetings.

Travel
Although listed in the mid-range area, travel by association management pharmacists depends somewhat on the type of association, level within the organization, and specific project. Most respondents travel minimally once a year for the annual meeting of the organization. Some may travel monthly or multiple times each month.

Writing
Writing skills are necessary in association management. Project reports, editorials, speech writing, white papers, and journal articles are just a few of the resources written by this group. One respondent stated the necessity to “hone your communication skills, written as well as oral presentations.”
Working With Teams
Respondents tend to have some team-related projects. In addition, there is a need to share information across different departments; therefore, working as a team is very helpful to keep everyone informed.

= 6.9

= 7.3
## Mean Scores for Critical Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Interaction with people</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Performing physical assessments</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Interpreting laboratory values</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Continuity of relationships</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Extent to which effect is direct</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Collaboration with other professionals</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Educating other professionals</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Variety of daily activities</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Multiple task handling</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Problem solving</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Focus of expertise</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Innovative thinking</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Applying scientific knowledge</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Applying medical knowledge</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Creating new knowledge by conducting research</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Managing others</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Managing business operations</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Pressure/Stress</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Work schedule</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Part time opportunities</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Job sharing</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Exit and re-entry</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Parental leave</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Free time for leisure/family activities</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Job security</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Opportunities for advancement</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Opportunities for leadership development</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Community prestige</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Professional involvement</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Income</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Benefits (vacation, health, retirement)</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Geographic location</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Working Remotely</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Autonomy</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Self-Worth</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. Future focus</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. Professional prestige</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. Unique practice environment</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Advanced degree</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. Entrepreneurial opportunity</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. Additional training</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. Interacting with co-workers</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. Travel</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. Writing</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. Working with teams</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reference

Professional Organizations
American Pharmacists Association (APhA)
2215 Constitution Ave, NW, Washington, DC 20037
Tel: 800-237-APhA  Fax: 202-783-2351
www.pharmacist.com

American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP)
1727 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22314
Tel: 703-739-2330  Fax: 703-836-8982
www.aacp.org

American Society of Association Executives (ASAE)
1575 I Street NW, Washington, DC 20005
Tel: 202-626-2723  TDD: 202-626-2803  Fax: 202-371-8825
www.asaenet.org

American Society of Consultant Pharmacists (ASCP)
1321 Duke Street, Alexandria, VA 22314
Tel: 703-739-1300  Fax: 703-739-1321
www.ascp.com

American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP)
7272 Wisconsin Avenue, Bethesda, MD 20814
Tel: 301-657-3000
www.ashp.org

National Association of Chain Drug Stores
1776 Wilson Blvd., Suite 200, Arlington, VA 22209
Tel: 703-549-3001  Fax: 703-836-4869
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 Alliance of State Pharmacy Associations
2530 Professional Road, Suite 202, Richmond, VA 23235
Tel: 804-285-4431  Fax: 804-612-6555
www.naspa.us

© 2013 by the American Pharmacists Association. All rights reserved.
APhA Career Pathway Evaluation Program for Pharmacy Professionals – pharmacist.com