

Home Health Care

Background

Home health care is a practice that specializes in treating patients in their homes or other residential facilities, such as assisted living communities. Most of the prescription therapy is directed toward intravenous (IV) admixtures that are compounded by the home health care pharmacist at the direction of the physician. This type of practice also may focus on other complex therapy regimens. Because of the complexity of the medications and setups required, home health care pharmacies tend to concentrate on fewer patients than other types of pharmacies. It is typical for a home health care pharmacy to service as few as 50 to 80 patients at a time. Pharmacists working in a home health care role may partner with hospice organizations, visiting nurse teams, and social services team members.

Twenty-two percent of respondents' time is spent in patient care services. An additional 19% is spent dispensing medications (including the associated patient counseling). Business/department management takes up an additional 18%, followed by medication preparation at 8% (including the preparation of complex parenteral prescription medications), and health professional counseling, also at 8%.

One home health care pharmacist from Wisconsin summarized the feelings of many of the respondents by saying that their role "assists patients and professional partners to successful patient outcomes."

Characteristics

Fifty-three home health care pharmacists responded to the 2007 *APhA Career Pathway Evaluation Program* survey. Eighty-one percent held an entry-level pharmacy degree, with 28% having PharmD degrees. Six percent indicated an advanced degree (MA, MS, MBS, PhD, or other). Eleven percent completed a residency program, 19% completed certificate training, and 13% reported to have completed some form of other training.

The respondents' average age was 44 years old. Slightly over half of the respondents (53%) were male. Close to three fourths of the respondents (72%) report that they are in management positions. Annual income data indicated 31% having an income of \$80,000–\$100,000. In addition, 62% earn more than \$100,000, with 10% earning over \$170,000 per year. Respondents represented 34 states.

The majority of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with their work, with 64% indicating they are "extremely satisfied" and 32% indicating "somewhat satisfied." Over half of these pharmacists (51%) find their career "extremely challenging" and another 45% indicated "somewhat challenging."

One pharmacist from Idaho indicated that home health care pharmacists must have a "clinical focus and work with a health care team approach."

Insider's Perspective

What aspects of the job are most appealing?

Twenty-three percent indicated work schedule flexibility as one of the most appealing aspects of their work; 19% indicated that the most appealing aspect of their work was the “clinical involvement with patients.”

A respondent from Michigan stated that “direct clinical involvement with patients, families or caregivers, and other health care workers” is an enjoyable aspect of these positions. Another respondent from Missouri enjoyed the “clinical consultations with patients and other health care professionals.” A Maryland pharmacist stated appeal in “putting training to use on a daily basis.”

What aspects of the job are least appealing?

In contrast to the most appealing aspects, 36% indicated that the “on call” aspect of the position was the least appealing part of their work. Another 13% stated “insurance issues” as the least appealing aspect. Eight percent also were concerned with the amount of paperwork that needs to be completed.

An Illinois respondent expressed concern for the “hectic, ‘on call’ hours, and dealing with big corporations.” An Ohio respondent expressed “financial/reimbursement concerns and ‘on call’ responsibilities.”

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

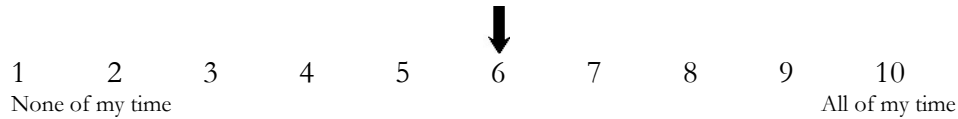
The most important factor cited by respondents (23%) was to consider the “on call” workload that must be handled. One pharmacist from Colorado simply said, “‘on call’ demands.” A respondent from Iowa indicated that “in this area you need to be creative and to be able to consider many practical aspects of a treatment.”

Critical Factor Ratings

Interaction With Patients

Interaction with patients was mentioned as one of the most satisfying aspects of home health care pharmacy, although comments from respondents indicated that this interaction was often by telephone. Whether talking with physicians, nurses, or patients, working with people is one of the core characteristics of being a home health care pharmacist.

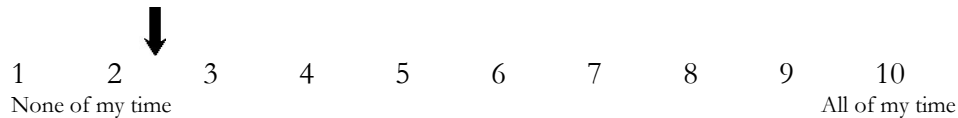
= 6.0
 $\sigma = 2.2$



Conducting Physical Assessments

At 2.3, this is the lowest rating of any critical factor by this group. While the evaluation of symptoms, laboratory reports, and other indicators can be helpful in directing the patient's therapy, in some cases physical assessment information is provided to the pharmacist versus the pharmacist conducting the assessment.

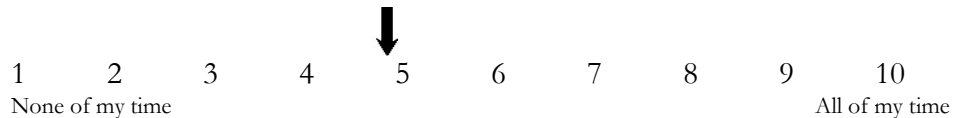
= 2.3
 $\sigma = 1.8$



Interpreting Laboratory Values

Home health care pharmacy is often seen as an excellent opportunity to conduct basic preliminary health assessments of patients. Evaluation of symptoms, laboratory reports, and other indicators can be helpful in directing the patient's therapy.

= 4.8
 $\sigma = 2.2$



Continuity of Relationships

Home health care pharmacists have the opportunity to get to know their patients and other community health professionals on a personal level. They develop a working knowledge of the idiosyncrasies of their patients and their IV therapies; many of these pharmacists indicated that this is key to their effectiveness in helping patients. A respondent from Washington stated that pharmacists in these positions may "follow patients for weeks to years in the home setting."

= 6.9
 $\sigma = 2.5$



Applying Scientific Knowledge

Applying scientific knowledge received a score of 6.9, indicating that a fair amount of the daily tasks involve the utilization of the scientific knowledge. These tasks include medication compounding in relation to IV admixtures, general principles of dissolution, and collaboration with other health care professionals.

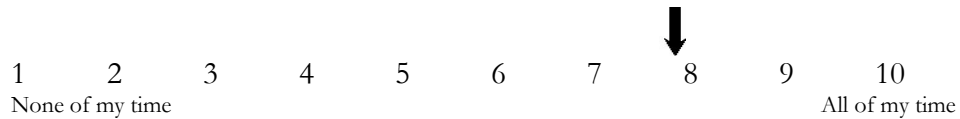
= 6.9
 $\sigma = 1.8$



Applying Medical Knowledge

Applying medical knowledge received a higher score of 7.8, compared with scientific knowledge application.

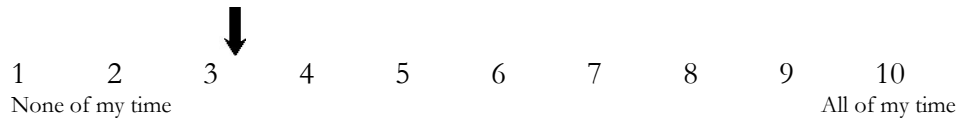
= 7.8
 $\sigma = 1.7$



Creating New Knowledge by Conducting Research

Home health care pharmacy is a setting designed mostly for the application of learned knowledge. It is the arena where the results of pharmaceutical research and studies are used to improve patients' lives.

= 3.2
 $\sigma = 2.2$



Management/Supervision of Others

In home health care pharmacy, the majority of classical management or supervisory tasks are considered the responsibility of the pharmacy manager. However, home health care staff pharmacists still maintain a supervisory role because, when on duty, they are responsible for the conduct and practice in that pharmacy. This includes supervision of the technicians and any clerks in the pharmacy.

= 6.8
 $\sigma = 2.5$



Management/Supervision of a Business

Respondents indicated that they spend less time on business management than on management of others. This holds true for many employee pharmacists; however, those who own their own home health care business are much more involved in business management.

= 6.0

$\sigma = 2.8$



Pressure/Stress

Home health care pharmacists indicated that they experience pressure or stress more often than not in their practice, as indicated by a rating of 6.9. Given what is known about home health care pharmacy, the level of pressure and stress relates to getting everything done in the time allotted.

= 6.9

$\sigma = 2.0$



Work Schedule

The work schedule for home health care pharmacists tends toward the predictable side as indicated by the rating of 6.9. This is one of the more appealing aspects of the practice.

= 6.9

$\sigma = 2.9$



Part-Time Opportunities

Receiving a mid-range rating in the survey at 5.2, pharmacists indicated that home health care pharmacy offered some opportunity for part-time employment. With today's shortage, pharmacies are often looking for staffers to "fill in the gaps" in their schedule. However, the ability of pharmacists to fill in for home health care pharmacy is not that great. This offers an excellent opportunity for those pharmacists who already work full-time, with experience in IV admixture, to pick up extra hours during their weekends or evenings.

= 5.2

$\sigma = 3.5$



Job-Sharing Opportunities

On the lower mid-range of the scale, home health care pharmacists see some opportunities for job-sharing. However, similar to the statements for part-time work, the skills necessary for this position do not provide for a general practitioner to easily enter the field.

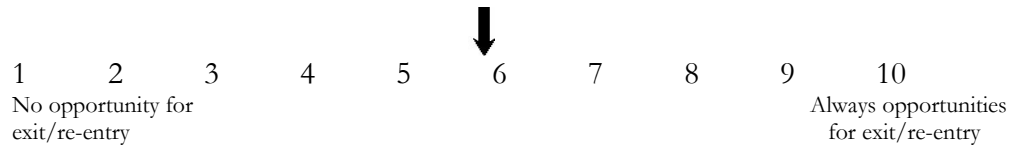
= 4.4
 $\sigma = 3.4$



Exit/Re-entry Opportunities

Opportunities do exist in home health care for pharmacists to leave and re-enter the field. With the shortages seen today, this is not an uncommon item event.

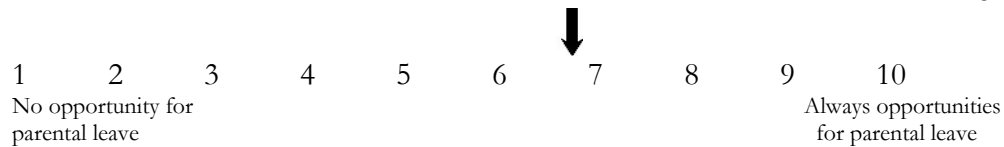
= 5.8
 $\sigma = 3.1$



Parental Leave Opportunities

As with larger organizations, parental leave is one of the benefits offered to most employees. Respondents indicated that they have this opportunity.

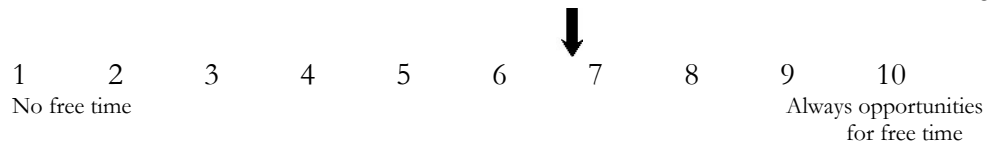
= 6.8
 $\sigma = 3.3$



Leisure/Family Time

With a work schedule that is more regular and predictable—and overtime not excessive—home health care pharmacists are able to plan for leisure time or time with their families. However, pharmacists are sometimes required to work during holidays or weekends when other family members or friends are off from work. In addition, the concern with “on call” shifts can affect free time.

= 6.8
 $\sigma = 2.5$



Job Security

Pharmacists in home health care pharmacy agree that, on the whole, they enjoy good job security with a high range score of 8.1.

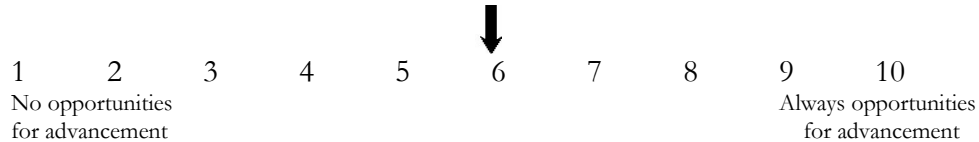
$$\begin{aligned} &= 8.1 \\ \sigma &= 1.6 \end{aligned}$$



Opportunities for Advancement

Career advancement is limited by the size of the organization, and home health care pharmacies are typically small. If a pharmacist works in a small pharmacy, there may not be the opportunity to go beyond pharmacy manager when compared with a larger corporate structure. However, in a large operation, they may have more versatility to choose a way to advance their career.

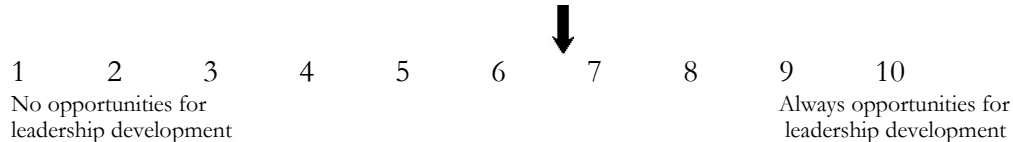
$$\begin{aligned} &= 5.9 \\ \sigma &= 2.6 \end{aligned}$$



Opportunities for Leadership Development

Leadership development opportunities ranked a 6.7, indicating that this opportunity does exist for home health care pharmacists. It takes vision to guide an individual to a goal and initiative to take the steps necessary to get to that goal; these skills are often a critical component of personal career development.

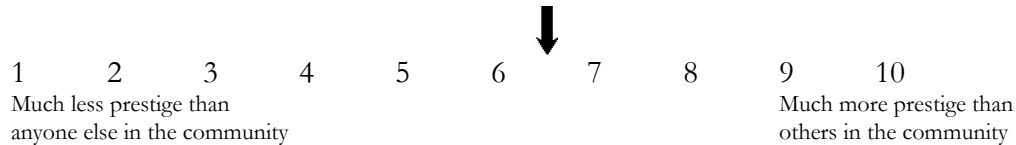
$$\begin{aligned} &= 6.7 \\ \sigma &= 2.5 \end{aligned}$$



Community Prestige

In community prestige, home health care pharmacy scored on an above-average level of 6.5. Home health care pharmacists often become well known in their community for helping individuals.

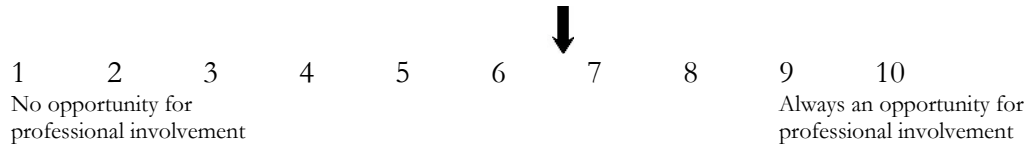
$$\begin{aligned} &= 6.5 \\ \sigma &= 2.1 \end{aligned}$$



Professional Involvement

Professional involvement of individual pharmacists is critical to the development of the profession as a whole. In this survey, it was reported that home health care pharmacists have the opportunity to be involved in professional meetings and events with a rating of 6.7. Again, professional involvement is limited by the nature of practice and the motivation of the individual pharmacist.

= 6.7
 $\sigma = 2.3$



Income

Though income is certainly important, it often reflects other factors at work such as the national shortage of pharmacists. Home health care pharmacists ranked income at 7.5, indicating that they lean toward feeling that they are properly compensated for their work. As with other types of pharmacists, income is judged proportionate with effort.

= 7.5
 $\sigma = 2.4$



Benefits (vacation, health, retirement)

Benefits are related to the overall compensation package. Respondents rated their benefits at 8.0, slightly higher than income. Pharmacists apparently feel that the scope and depth of benefits is commensurate with income.

= 8.0
 $\sigma = 1.7$



Geographic location

The fact that pharmacist shortages exist in almost every state gives pharmacists an opportunity to work in a desired location, and a rating of 7.7 indicates that this is a relatively strong factor in this group. Possibly, the geographic factor relates more to the practice environment with a given location, making home health care pharmacists relatively happy with the choices they have for locations.

= 7.7
 $\sigma = 3.2$



Autonomy

Autonomy in home health care pharmacy ranked in the upper range at 8.1. A characteristic of home health care pharmacists is that they almost always work alone. One of the liberties of home health care pharmacy in practice is that the pharmacist on duty has final say in most decisions. These pharmacists recognize their autonomy and apparently value this aspect of their work.

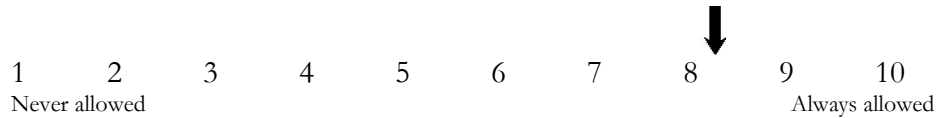
= 8.1
 $\sigma = 1.5$



Self-Worth

Home health care pharmacists appear to gain a significant amount of self-worth from their work with a rating of 8.2. This is consistent with the other attributes of the work, and indicates a sense of accomplishment among home health care pharmacists.

= 8.2
 $\sigma = 1.7$



Future Focus

Some tasks in home health care pharmacy can be viewed as immediately focused, while others (e.g., planning future medication schedules) are more focused on the future. Pharmacists indicated that they have a tendency to focus on the future with a score of 6.9, thereby recognizing this duality in practice.

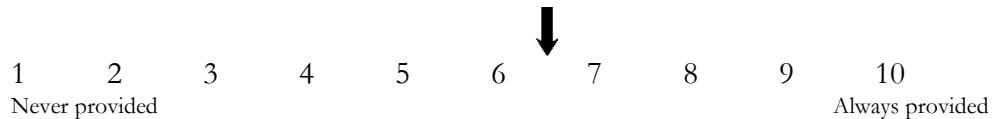
= 6.9
 $\sigma = 2.3$



Professional Prestige

Professional prestige is related to the earlier rating on collaboration with other professionals. Since the practice of the home health care pharmacist is typically related to other health care providers (e.g., physicians, nurses), they are well known professionally. However, home health care pharmacists do not develop a reputation in the professional community in which they work as indicated by the modest rating of 6.5 in this profile.

= 6.5
 $\sigma = 2.6$



Unique Practice Environment

Home health care pharmacists expressly recognize the unique nature of the practice environment in which they work as indicated by the third-highest ranking of 8.5 for this profile. Though related to a pharmacy, most of their duties involve working in the patient's home, giving them a unique practice site.

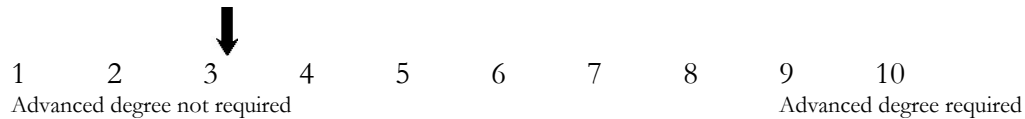
= 8.5
 $\sigma = 1.2$



Advanced Degree

An advanced degree is not typically required for home health care pharmacists because the nature of the practice is not geared to research, either in management or science.

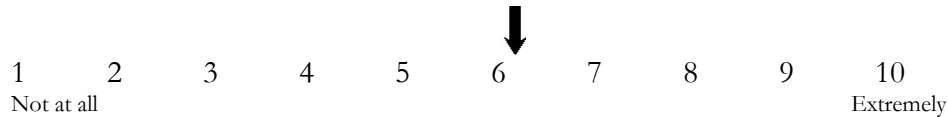
= 3.1
 $\sigma = 3.0$



Entrepreneurial Opportunity

Entrepreneurial opportunity is readily available in home health care pharmacy—most of these pharmacies are independently owned. However, the number of home health care pharmacies is relatively static, meaning that few opportunities arise for entrepreneurial opportunity. Those that do, afford pharmacists the chance to own their own pharmacy.

= 6.1
 $\sigma = 3.1$



Additional Training

Although an advanced degree is not a requirement for home health care pharmacists, additional training is required. Respondents rated this factor the highest for this profile at 8.9. To practice in home health care pharmacy, the pharmacist must understand both the complexity and nuances of IV products.

= 8.9
 $\sigma = 1.4$



Interacting With Colleagues

Ranked as the second-highest factor in the profile, respondents indicated an upper range of 8.6. Taking into account the collaborations that are needed for these positions, a high rating for colleague interaction makes sense.

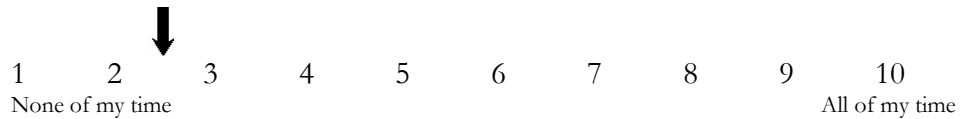
= 8.6
 $\sigma = 1.5$



Travel

Travel is not a specific requirement for the day-to-day roles that respondents indicated. However, there is opportunity to travel depending on the position that one holds.

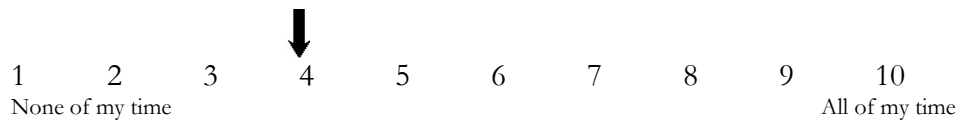
= 2.5
 $\sigma = 1.5$



Writing

Respondents were in the mid-range for the amount of writing that they do.

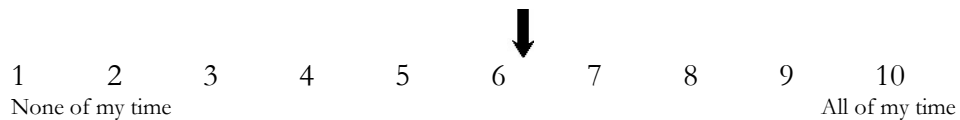
= 3.9
 $\sigma = 2.3$



Working With Teams

As mentioned earlier, many positions required collaboration with other health care providers to determine the overall care plan.

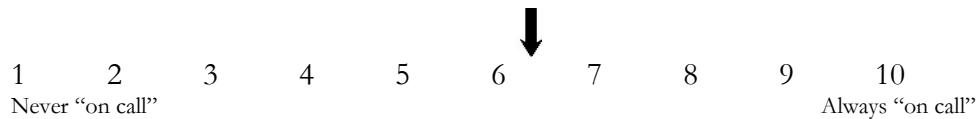
= 6.2
 $\sigma = 2.9$



“On Call”

Although respondents rated this factor at 6.3 for the survey, this actually is the highest score for any career profile regarding “on call” activities.

= 6.3
 $\sigma = 2.5$



Work on Holidays

Home health care pharmacists are in the low mid-range regarding working on holidays.

= 3.6

$\sigma = 2.5$



Work on Weekends

Home health care pharmacists rated this factor the same as working on holidays.

= 3.6

$\sigma = 2.5$

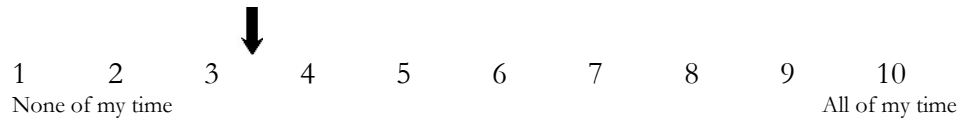


Presentations

Respondents rated presentations at a 3.4, indicating that there are times when they give presentations.

= 3.4

$\sigma = 1.5$



Mean Scores for Critical Factors

1. Interaction With Patients	6.0
2. Conducting Physical Assessments	2.3
3. Interpreting Laboratory Values	4.8
4. Continuity of Relationships	6.9
5. Helping People	6.8
6. Collaboration With Other Professionals	7.2
7. Educating Other Professionals	5.1
8. Variety of Daily Activities	6.5
9. Multiple Task Handling	7.9
10. Problem Solving	5.5
11. Focus of Expertise	6.8
12. Innovative Thinking	7.0
13. Applying Scientific Knowledge	6.9
14. Applying Medical Knowledge	7.8
15. Creating New Knowledge by Conducting Research	3.2
16. Management/Supervision of Others	6.8
17. Management/Supervision of a Business	6.0
18. Pressure/Stress	6.9
19. Work Schedule	6.9
20. Part-Time Opportunities	5.2
21. Job-Sharing Opportunities	4.4
22. Exit/Re-entry Opportunities	5.8
23. Parental Leave Opportunities	6.8
24. Leisure/Family Time	6.8
25. Job Security	8.1
26. Opportunities for Advancement	5.9
27. Opportunities for Leadership Development	6.7
28. Community Prestige	6.5
29. Professional Involvement	6.7
30. Income	7.5
31. Benefits (vacation, health, retirement)	8.0
32. Geographic Location	7.7
33. Autonomy	8.1
34. Self-Worth	8.2
35. Future Focus	6.9
36. Professional Prestige	6.5
37. Unique Practice Environment	8.5
38. Advanced Degree	3.1
39. Entrepreneurial Opportunity	6.1
40. Additional Training	8.9
41. Interacting With Colleagues	8.6
42. Travel	2.5
43. Writing	3.9
44. Working With Teams	6.2
45. "On Call"	6.3
46. Work on Holidays	3.6
47. Work on Weekends	3.6
48. Presentations	3.4

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

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

American Society for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition (ASPEN)
8630 Fenton Street, Suite 412, Silver Spring, MD 20910
Tel: 301-587-6315 Fax: 301-587-2365
www.clinnutr.org

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