

Hospital Pharmacy: Staff

Background

The inpatient setting of hospital pharmacy is unique in a number of ways. The patients treated by a hospital pharmacist typically have more complicated conditions than those in an ambulatory setting and take multiple medications. A staff pharmacist may have exposure to oncology, intravenous (IV) medication therapy, neonatal care, nutrition, pain therapy, geriatrics, and much more. Staff pharmacists face a varied set of responsibilities including dispensing medication, making purchasing decisions, monitoring drug therapy, preparing IV medication, and overseeing drug administration.

The location and layout of the pharmacy can vary greatly among hospitals. Some are centralized, with all of the pharmacy staff and equipment located in a single area of the hospital, usually on one of the lower floors. Another format is the decentralized pharmacy, where there is a main pharmacy in a central location but there are also “mini-pharmacies,” called satellites, located throughout the hospital at key patient care units. The type of the pharmacy depends on the size, needs, resources, and focus of the hospital.

Hospital pharmacists interact with nurses and physicians in their positions. Often, they do not work directly with the patient, but rather with the other health care providers to optimize the patient’s therapy. In some hospitals, however, there are opportunities for pharmacists to see patients by rounding with physicians and nurses. A respondent from Florida indicated enjoyment in the “ability to work with other health care professionals.” Another respondent from Utah liked “working with different disciplines and the multi-committee involvement.” Finally, a Texas staff pharmacist stated being “able to work with bright physicians, able to collaborate on research, and [discuss] difficult patient care issues.”

Twenty-five percent of a staff pharmacist’s time is spent on patient care services and another 25% is spent on medication dispensing, including associated patient counseling. An additional 11% of their time is spent on medication preparation/compounding. Eight percent of their time is spent on health professional consulting with an equal percent on data management.

Characteristics

Ninety-one hospital staff pharmacists responded to the 2007 *APhA Career Pathway Evaluation Program* survey. Seventy-nine percent of respondents indicated having an entry-level pharmacy degree with 50% indicated having a PharmD degree. An additional 24% earned an advanced degree such as an MA, MS, or MBA. Forty-nine percent and 4% had been through a residency or fellowship, respectively, and 20% indicated they had been through certificate training. Twenty-seven percent said that they had been through some form of additional training.

The respondents’ average age was 42 years old. Slightly over half of the respondents (57%) were female. Annual income data show 36% reporting an income between \$80,000–

\$100,000, while 54% earn more than \$100,000. Respondents represented 35 states.

The majority of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with their job with 69% indicating “extremely satisfied” and 29% indicating “somewhat satisfied.” Respondents felt the job was challenging with 73% indicating “extremely challenging” and 26% indicating “somewhat challenging.”

Insider’s Perspective

What aspects of the job are most appealing?

Four categories were highlighted by respondents as the most appealing in their work environment. “Interaction with people” (i.e., coworkers and other health care professionals) ranked highest at 25%. Patient interaction followed at 13%, with both work variety/diversity and the challenge of the position each being listed at 6%. A respondent from Tennessee indicated “[I] like the work environment, coworkers, and the new daily challenges.”

One respondent from Massachusetts put it succinctly saying that “satisfaction and knowledge that my input on pharmacotherapy can impact patient outcomes” is very appealing. Another staff pharmacist from Montana indicated enjoyment in “working both inpatient and outpatient duties.” Finally, a respondent from Ohio provided a broad look at the appealing aspects of the work, “[I enjoy] interacting with other health care professionals, clinical pharmacy, patient advocacy, answering questions from other professionals, preparation of IVs, and oncology preps.”

What aspects of the job are least appealing?

Fourteen percent of the respondents indicated that workload and long hours were the least appealing aspect of their work. Another 11% were concerned with the management and administration, and an additional 8% were concerned that there was not enough staff.

A respondent from New Jersey put it this way, “It’s the staffing.” An Oregon pharmacist reinforced this by stating concerns for “late hours and low staffing.” A Georgia respondent was concerned with the “too large workload [leading to] difficulty prioritizing tasks.”

What advice should students and practitioners consider when selecting the option of hospital staff pharmacy?

Students and practitioners should consider the training required and workload associated with hospital pharmacy. When working in a hospital, it is important to continually update knowledge on new medications and therapy to be able to provide the best care available for patients and to provide it at the most affordable level.

Critical Factor Ratings

Interaction With Patients

The nature of the work for hospital staff pharmacists does not give them regular exposure to the general public in their daily work. Therefore, interacting with patients rates in the low range, at 3.8, as a portion of a hospital staff pharmacist's workday.

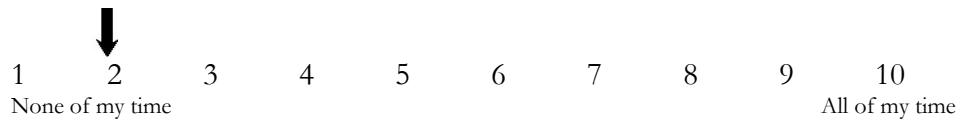
$$= 3.8$$
$$\sigma = 2.1$$



Conducting Physical Assessments

In a hospital setting, the majority of physical assessments will be conducted by the other health care professionals in the facility, such as nurses, physicians, and physical therapists.

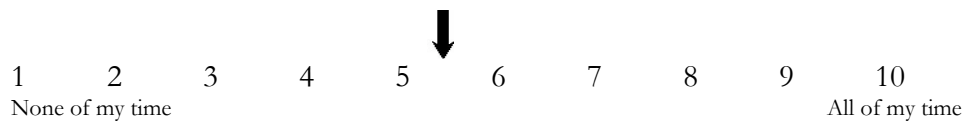
$$= 1.9$$
$$\sigma = 1.8$$



Interpreting Laboratory Values

Hospital pharmacists do have a role in evaluating patient laboratory values. Patients with complicated conditions on multiple medications need to be monitored continuously and staff pharmacists often play a key role in fine-tuning patient therapies through findings in blood and other laboratory tests.

$$= 5.4$$
$$\sigma = 2.5$$



Continuity of Relationships

As stated earlier, hospital staff pharmacists do not frequently have the opportunity to directly interact with patients. Opportunities do exist if a pharmacist works in an outpatient clinic because this setting allows for ongoing relationships.

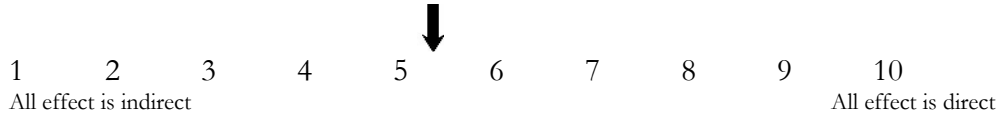
$$= 2.8$$
$$\sigma = 2.4$$



Helping People

In answer to the question “To what degree is your effect on the well-being of individuals indirect versus direct?” hospital staff pharmacists rated the factor mid-range at 5.3. In reviewing complex therapies and collaborating with other health care providers in the hospital, pharmacists can have a very direct effect on helping people. However, other work in the pharmacy, such as dispensing and IV medication preparation, has more indirect impact on people.

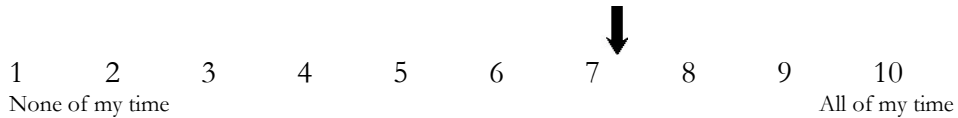
= 5.3
 $\sigma = 2.6$



Collaboration With Other Professionals

To the same degree that community pharmacists deal with the public and their patients, hospital pharmacists work with other health care professionals. In the hospital setting, there is the opportunity to interact with any number of specialty caregivers in obstetrics, nutrition, oncology, transplant, surgery, infectious disease, or other specialty areas. Hospital pharmacists are exposed to wide array clinical opportunities.

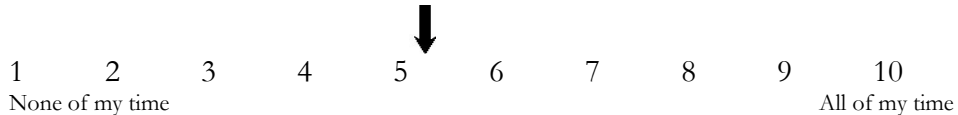
= 7.2
 $\sigma = 2.2$



Educating Other Professionals

By regularly interacting with other health care providers, hospital staff pharmacists have the opportunity to educate those professionals. Hospitals are a very intensive care environment and those who work there are always looking to expand their knowledge base to remain current with up-to-date information and provide the best care for their patients.

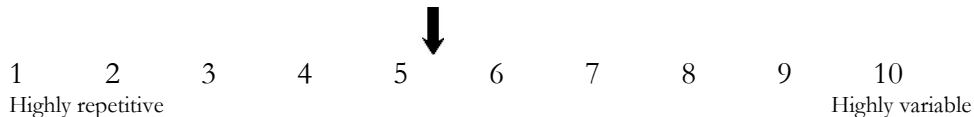
= 5.2
 $\sigma = 2.3$



Variety of Daily Activities

Hospital staff pharmacists indicate that their daily activities are split between those that are repetitive and those that are variable. Part of this may be attributed to the wider variety of medications that hospital pharmacies handle. Besides oral medications, hospital pharmacists handle chemotherapy, injectable medications, nutrition therapies, hydration therapy, and others that may have a different protocol to follow.

= 5.3
 $\sigma = 2.3$



Multiple Task Handling

With a large variety of medications and patients needing a high degree of attention and care, hospital staff pharmacists are charged with making sure those medications are delivered on time and accurately, and that those medications are optimal for patients. At the same time, staff pharmacists are required to answer phones and work with other professionals assisting them with patient care.

= 7.6
σ = 2.3



Problem Solving

Hospital staff pharmacists report that when faced with a problem in their practice, they are mid-range in the way they arrive at a solution. With more complicated patients, therapies sometimes will be chosen that require new approaches. And, each patient may respond differently to any given therapy, so adjustments must be made. However, many past experiences can be called upon to solve other problems.

= 5.2
σ = 1.9



Focus of Expertise

Staff pharmacists in hospital practice maintain a relatively general knowledge base. Hospital practice in a university hospital setting, however, does offer the opportunity for pharmacists to become more specialized and focused in their practice if they have a particular interest.

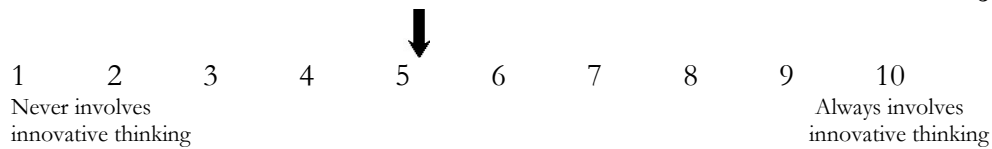
= 5.5
σ = 2.7



Innovative Thinking

In response to the question, "To what extent does your practice involve generating new ideas (innovative thinking) pertaining to pharmacy?" respondents rated the factor a mid-range 5.1, indicating that their practice requires some innovative thinking.

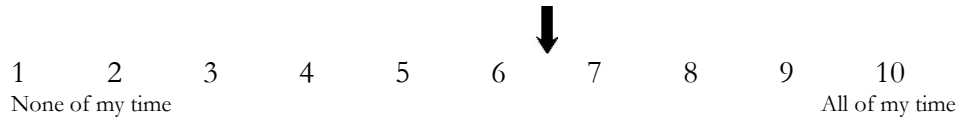
= 5.1
σ = 2.2



Applying Scientific Knowledge

Virtually every aspect of a hospital pharmacist's role involves the medications they learned about in pharmacy school, whether helping another health professional or the patient directly. Applying the science behind the medication is important to help realize optimal therapy.

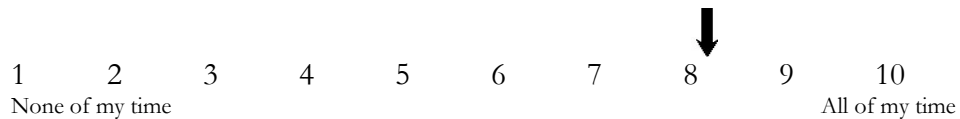
= 6.5
 $\sigma = 2.3$



Applying Medical Knowledge

Tied for second-highest rating in this profile, respondents rated the application of medical knowledge in the high range at 8.1. The utilization of medical knowledge is also crucial in planning and development in a hospital setting. Taking into account the collaboration with other professionals in the hospital, applying one's medical knowledge keeps pharmacy aligned with all departments.

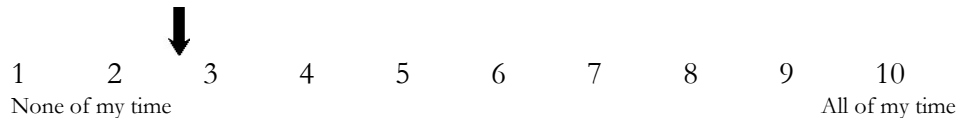
= 8.1
 $\sigma = 1.8$



Creating New Knowledge by Conducting Research

The standard community or rural hospital may not be involved in research projects. More often, research activities take place in university teaching hospitals. These facilities are typically larger and serve a variety of patient populations; the more diverse patient population usually affords conducting research projects on new medications or therapies.

= 2.7
 $\sigma = 2.0$



Management/Supervision of Others

Not surprisingly, this factor is tied for the third-largest difference in rating score compared with hospital managers. At 4.0, staff pharmacists rated the factor considerably lower than managers, who rated this 6.6. The technicians and staff in a hospital pharmacy are often more specialized and receive detailed training related to their responsibilities. They must be knowledgeable in sterile preparation techniques and understand how to handle medications in the pharmacy. Hospital staff pharmacists, at a minimum, interact with and supervise numerous technicians, and have the potential to grow into other management positions.

= 4.0
 $\sigma = 2.4$



Management/Supervision of a Business

This factor has the largest difference when compared with the ranking provided by hospital managers. Staff pharmacists rated this factor a 2.5, while managers rated this factor 5.5. Similar to the above factor, hospital managers are involved in more business oversight than are staff pharmacists.

$$= 2.5$$
$$\sigma = 2.0$$



Pressure/Stress

Hospital staff pharmacists reported that they frequently work under pressure or experience work-related stress. This is especially true when dealing with patients in critical care situations. Minor adjustments in therapy can sometimes mean the difference between whether a patient goes home or stays in the hospital. At times, these adjustments are needed immediately.

$$= 7.3$$
$$\sigma = 2.2$$



Work Schedule

Hospitals are unique from many other work environments because they must stay open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. This can make the work schedule difficult for pharmacists because they are needed on the night shift, on holidays, and during weekends. However, staff pharmacists report that their work schedule was generally predictable with a 6.6 rating.

$$= 6.6$$
$$\sigma = 3.1$$



Part-Time Opportunities

Because hospitals never close, there is an opportunity for pharmacists to work part-time, filling in schedule gaps. There is generally the opportunity to work a couple days or evenings during the week within the hospital setting.

$$= 5.2$$
$$\sigma = 3.2$$



Job-Sharing Opportunities

There are limited job-sharing opportunities for hospital staff pharmacists.

= 2.8
 $\sigma = 2.4$



Exit/Re-entry Opportunities

Opportunities do exist to exit/re-entry for hospital staff positions. The difficulty here is being able to re-enter the same position.

= 5.0
 $\sigma = 3.0$



Parental Leave Opportunities

As hospitals are larger organizations, parental leave tends to be one of the benefits offered to employees.

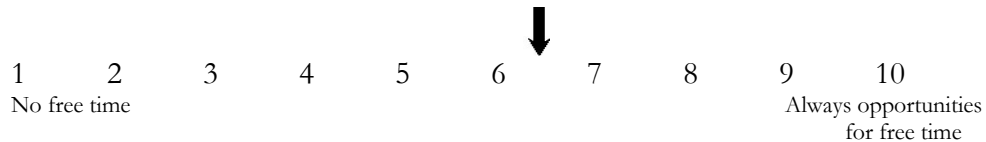
= 7.7
 $\sigma = 3.0$



Leisure/Family Time

Respondents indicate that despite holidays, weekends, and overnight shifts, they had the ability to plan free time for themselves and their family. This is related to the predictable work schedule that hospital pharmacy staff enjoy.

= 6.4
 $\sigma = 2.5$



Job Security

This factor was the third-highest rated for staff hospital pharmacists at 8.0. For the past few years, the country has been experiencing a shortage of pharmacists in all practice settings, which reinforces the security of the positions.

= 8.0
 $\sigma = 2.1$



Opportunities for Advancement

In hospital pharmacy, opportunities to advance could include becoming more specialized in practice or becoming involved in management and administration. The opportunity for either is greater within larger organizations.

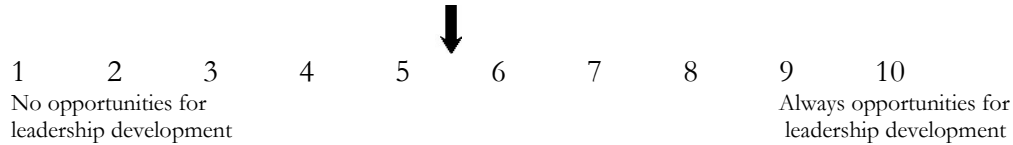
= 4.9
 $\sigma = 3.0$



Opportunities for Leadership Development

Leadership development was rated 5.5 in the survey response. As a hospital staff pharmacist, developing leadership may not be needed for most job aspects. However, it can be important when working with other health care professionals in making decisions on medication choices and therapy adjustments.

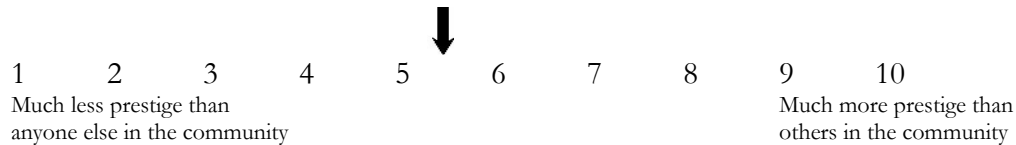
= 5.5
 $\sigma = 2.9$



Community Prestige

Especially in the smaller community hospital setting, pharmacists often become well known in their community for the services they provide. Their community prestige can be tied at times to the strength of the outreach that the hospital provides.

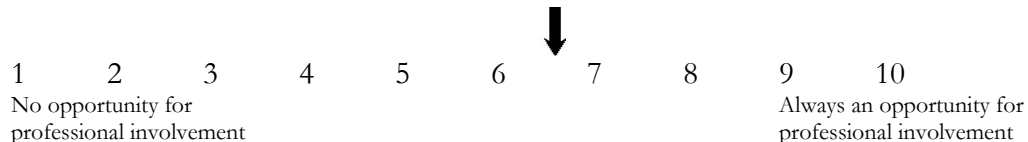
= 5.4
 $\sigma = 2.4$



Professional Involvement

Professional involvement of individual pharmacists is crucial to the development of the profession as a whole. Pharmacists need to communicate with each other so that the profession can continue to advance toward providing optimum health care for the public. In this survey, hospital staff pharmacists were in the mid-range for having the opportunity to be professionally involved in meetings and events in their profession.

= 6.6
 $\sigma = 2.9$



Income

As a result of the pharmacist shortage and high job market demand, pharmacists are enjoying high salary rates in hospital pharmacy, even those recently graduated from pharmacy school or new to hospital pharmacy.

= 6.7
 $\sigma = 2.8$



Benefits (vacation, health, retirement)

Often directly linked to income or salary, respondents rated benefits higher than income. Hospital staff pharmacists indicated that they have good benefits.

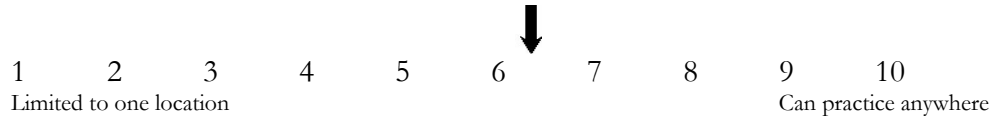
= 7.5
 $\sigma = 2.2$



Geographic Location

Hospital staff pharmacists feel they can practice in many places throughout the country. This may be due to the high demand for pharmacists.

= 6.3
 $\sigma = 3.4$



Autonomy

In a hospital, working with other health care professionals as a team, a pharmacist is looked to as the medication use expert. The pharmacist's opinion on medication use is trusted by other providers and implemented when treating a patient. This gives the pharmacists a good deal of autonomy in their work.

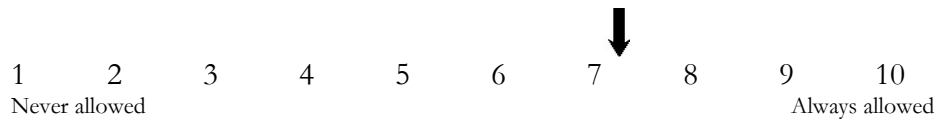
= 7.2
 $\sigma = 2.2$



Self-Worth

Hospital staff pharmacists feel a great deal of self-worth in their work. Helping make critical therapy decisions, working with other health care professionals, and making a difference in patients' lives all contribute to feeling value in the work they do.

= 7.2
 $\sigma = 2.6$



Future Focus

Respondents indicated that they are mid-range in focusing on immediate tasks versus being future focused. Hospitals care for a mix of patients; some are in and out of the hospital in a matter of days, while others may be in the hospital for weeks to months. With longer-term patients, pharmacists must think ahead and determine what may be needed, anticipating therapy for those patients as they progress.

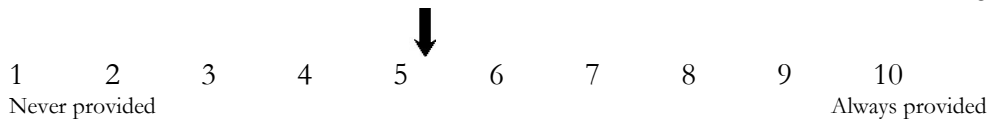
= 5.7
 $\sigma = 2.5$



Professional Prestige

Working with other health care professionals on a day-to-day basis, pharmacists become well known in the hospital for their abilities by physicians, nurses, and others. However, there is usually little chance for interacting with other pharmacists and professionals outside of their own hospital.

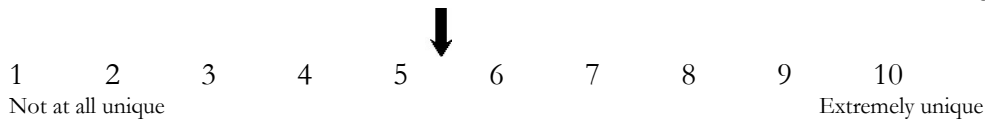
= 5.2
 $\sigma = 2.8$



Unique Practice Environment

The uniqueness of the hospital practice environment will depend greatly on each hospital's characteristics and pharmacy layout. In the classic centralized-pharmacy setting, there may not be much opportunity for unique practice approaches. However, in hospitals that employ satellite pharmacies, there is a chance for pharmacists to get much more involved with their patients and with other professionals. In addition, outpatient clinics staffed by pharmacists may provide a unique setting.

= 5.4
 $\sigma = 3.1$



Advanced Degree

Typically in hospital pharmacy, an advanced degree is required only if the individual chooses to pursue a management position or wants to become specialized in an area of practice. Since the nature of the practice may not be geared as much to research, advanced degrees typically are not required.

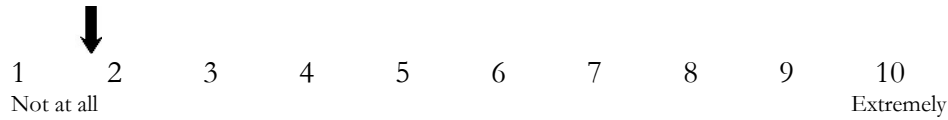
= 3.2
 $\sigma = 3.3$



Entrepreneurial Opportunity

There are very few entrepreneurial opportunities for hospital staff pharmacists.

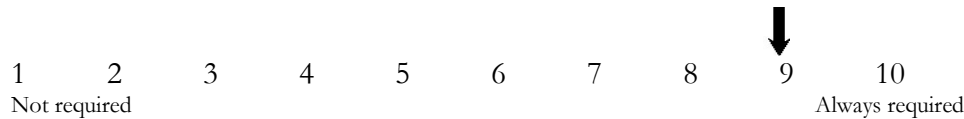
= 1.8
 $\sigma = 1.6$



Additional Training

This factor was rated the highest across the entire profile by hospital staff pharmacists. With the number of conditions and treatments encountered in a hospital, staff pharmacists must continually keep up with new research and therapy regimens. The hospital is a very natural venue for learning and adding to one's knowledge set.

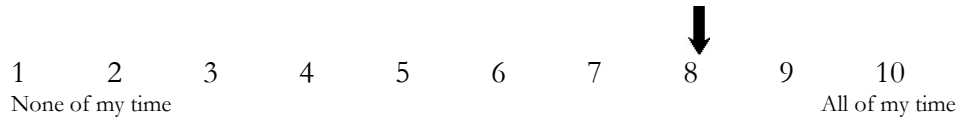
= 8.9
 $\sigma = 2.2$



Interacting With Colleagues

This factor was tied for the third-highest rating by this group. Considering that this factor is one of the more appealing aspects described by survey respondents, it is not surprising that it ranks as high as it does.

= 8.1
 $\sigma = 1.7$



Travel

In contrast to the previous two factors, which were in the high range, hospital pharmacists rated travel with the lowest rating at 1.7. Travel is not a specific requirement for the day-to-day roles of these pharmacists.

= 1.7
 $\sigma = 1.1$



Writing

Respondents were in the low range in the amount of writing that they do.

= 3.0
 $\sigma = 2.0$



Presentations

Respondents rated this factor at 3.2, indicating that they infrequently give presentations.

$$\begin{aligned} &= 3.2 \\ \sigma &= 2.1 \end{aligned}$$



Mean Scores for Critical Factors

1. Interaction With Patients	3.8
2. Conducting Physical Assessments	1.9
3. Interpreting Laboratory Values	5.4
4. Continuity of Relationships	2.8
5. Helping People	5.3
6. Collaboration With Other Professionals	7.2
7. Educating Other Professionals	5.2
8. Variety of Daily Activities	5.3
9. Multiple Task Handling	7.6
10. Problem Solving	5.2
11. Focus of Expertise	5.5
12. Innovative Thinking	5.1
13. Applying Scientific Knowledge	6.5
14. Applying Medical Knowledge	8.1
15. Creating New Knowledge by Conducting Research	2.7
16. Management/Supervision of Others	4.0
17. Management/Supervision of a Business	2.5
18. Pressure/Stress	7.3
19. Work Schedule	6.6
20. Part-Time Opportunities	5.2
21. Job-Sharing Opportunities	2.8
22. Exit/Re-entry Opportunities	5.0
23. Parental Leave Opportunities	7.7
24. Leisure/Family Time	6.4
25. Job Security	8.0
26. Opportunities for Advancement	4.9
27. Opportunities for Leadership Development	5.5
28. Community Prestige	5.4
29. Professional Involvement	6.6
30. Income	6.7
31. Benefits (vacation, health, retirement)	7.5
32. Geographic Location	6.3
33. Autonomy	7.2
34. Self-Worth	7.2
35. Future Focus	5.7
36. Professional Prestige	5.2
37. Unique Practice Environment	5.4
38. Advanced Degree	3.2
39. Entrepreneurial Opportunity	1.8
40. Additional Training	8.9
41. Interacting With Colleagues	8.1
42. Travel	1.7
43. Writing	3.0
44. Working With Teams	4.9
45. "On Call"	3.3
46. Work on Holidays	6.0
47. Work on Weekends	5.6
48. Presentations	3.2

Reference

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

Professional Organizations

American Hospital Association (AHA)
One North Franklin, Chicago, IL 60606
Tel: 312-422-3000 Fax: 312-422-4796
www.aha.org

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

Board of Pharmaceutical Specialties (BPS)
1100 15th Street NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20005
Tel: 202-429-7591
www.bpsweb.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.