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.”
Critical Factor Ratings

Interaction With Patients
Interaction with patients was mentioned as one of the most satisfying aspects of the work that a managed care pharmacist performs. This factor was shown to occupy a majority of the pharmacist’s time. Even with this information, respondents rated this factor mid-range. Perhaps part of the response is related to the vary interactions of pharmacists depending on their specific position within a managed care organization. Interaction with patients can be face to face, via telephone conversations, or even exchanges of information through e-mails.

\[ \mu = 4.2 \]
\[ \sigma = 2.5 \]

Conducting Physical Assessments
Managed care pharmacy is often seen as an excellent opportunity to conduct basic preliminary health assessments of patients. However, most respondents indicated that very little of their time is spent on physical assessments with a rating of 1.3, which is the lowest rating for this profile.

\[ \mu = 1.3 \]
\[ \sigma = 0.9 \]

Interpreting Laboratory Values
Many managed care pharmacies are within the same facility as the primary care provider, so they have access to all diagnostic and laboratory services that can be helpful in managing drug therapy. However, most respondents indicated that very little of their time is spent on these assessments with a rating of 1.9.

\[ \mu = 1.9 \]
\[ \sigma = 1.3 \]
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
σ = 2.9

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
No ongoing/long-term relationships

All relationships are ongoing/long-term

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
σ = 3.2

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
All effect is indirect

All effect is direct

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
σ = 2.3

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
None of my time

All of my time

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
σ = 2.4

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
None of my time

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

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{Highly repetitive} & \quad \text{Highly variable} \\
\text{1} & \quad \text{2} & \quad \text{3} & \quad \text{4} & \quad \text{5} & \quad \text{6} & \quad \text{7} & \quad \text{8} & \quad \text{9} & \quad \text{10}
\end{align*} \]

\[ \begin{align*}
\mu & = 6.2 \\
\sigma & = 3.0
\end{align*} \]

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

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{Always one activity at a time} & \quad \text{Always several tasks at a time} \\
\text{1} & \quad \text{2} & \quad \text{3} & \quad \text{4} & \quad \text{5} & \quad \text{6} & \quad \text{7} & \quad \text{8} & \quad \text{9} & \quad \text{10}
\end{align*} \]

\[ \begin{align*}
\mu & = 5.7 \\
\sigma & = 3.3
\end{align*} \]

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

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{Always tried and true} & \quad \text{Always untested alternatives} \\
\text{1} & \quad \text{2} & \quad \text{3} & \quad \text{4} & \quad \text{5} & \quad \text{6} & \quad \text{7} & \quad \text{8} & \quad \text{9} & \quad \text{10}
\end{align*} \]

\[ \begin{align*}
\mu & = 4.9 \\
\sigma & = 2.9
\end{align*} \]

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

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{Generally defined area} & \quad \text{Sharply defined area} \\
\text{1} & \quad \text{2} & \quad \text{3} & \quad \text{4} & \quad \text{5} & \quad \text{6} & \quad \text{7} & \quad \text{8} & \quad \text{9} & \quad \text{10}
\end{align*} \]

\[ \begin{align*}
\mu & = 4.9 \\
\sigma & = 2.2
\end{align*} \]
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.

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccccc}
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 & 9 & 10 \\
\text{Never involves innovative thinking} & & & & & & & & & \text{Always involves innovative thinking}
\end{array}
\]

= 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.

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccccc}
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 & 9 & 10 \\
\text{None of my time} & & & & & & & & & \text{All of my time}
\end{array}
\]

= 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.

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccccc}
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 & 9 & 10 \\
\text{None of my time} & & & & & & & & & \text{All of my time}
\end{array}
\]

= 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.

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccccc}
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 & 9 & 10 \\
\text{None of my time} & & & & & & & & & \text{All of my time}
\end{array}
\]

= 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.

\[ \mu = 3.1 \]
\[ \sigma = 2.6 \]

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.

\[ \mu = 2.8 \]
\[ \sigma = 2.7 \]

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.”

\[ \mu = 6.4 \]
\[ \sigma = 2.3 \]

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.

\[ \mu = 7.7 \]
\[ \sigma = 2.8 \]
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.

\[ \sigma = 2.9 \]

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.

\[ \sigma = 0.5 \]

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

\[ \sigma = 3.2 \]
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
\(\sigma = 2.1\)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
No free time Always opportunities for free time

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
\(\sigma = 2.6\)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
No security/stability Total security/stability

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
\(\sigma = 3.0\)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
No opportunities for advancement Always opportunities for advancement

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
\(\sigma = 3.2\)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
No opportunities for leadership development Always opportunities for leadership development
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.

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccccc}
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 & 9 & 10 \\
\text{Much less prestige than anyone else in the community} & & & & & & & & & \\
\text{Much more prestige than others in the community} & & & & & & & & & \\
\end{array}
\]

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.

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccccc}
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 & 9 & 10 \\
\text{No opportunity for professional involvement} & & & & & & & & & \\
\text{Always an opportunity for professional involvement} & & & & & & & & & \\
\end{array}
\]

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

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccccc}
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 & 9 & 10 \\
\text{Not properly compensated} & & & & & & & & & \\
\text{Properly compensated} & & & & & & & & & \\
\end{array}
\]

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.

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccccc}
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 & 9 & 10 \\
\text{No benefit package} & & & & & & & & & \\
\text{Excellent benefit package} & & & & & & & & & \\
\end{array}
\]
**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.

\[ \bar{X} = 6.2 \]
\[ \sigma = 3.5 \]

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<tr>
<td>Limited to one location</td>
<td>Can practice anywhere</td>
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**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.

\[ \bar{X} = 5.6 \]
\[ \sigma = 3.4 \]

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<tr>
<td>No autonomy</td>
<td>Total autonomy</td>
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**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.

\[ \bar{X} = 6.3 \]
\[ \sigma = 2.9 \]

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<tr>
<td>Never allowed</td>
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**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.

\[ \bar{X} = 5.5 \]
\[ \sigma = 2.7 \]

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<tr>
<td>Focus on immediate task</td>
<td>Focus on future</td>
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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.

\[
\begin{align*}
&= 4.8 \\
&\sigma = 3.2
\end{align*}
\]

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.

\[
\begin{align*}
&= 7.2 \\
&\sigma = 2.3
\end{align*}
\]

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.

\[
\begin{align*}
&= 4.4 \\
&\sigma = 3.8
\end{align*}
\]

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

\[
\begin{align*}
&= 2.7 \\
&\sigma = 2.8
\end{align*}
\]
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
σ = 3.1

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

= 6.4
σ = 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
σ = 1.8

Writing
Respondents were in the lower range regarding writing.

= 3.4
σ = 1.9

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

= 5.3
σ = 3.2
“On Call”
Respondents indicated a low “on call” need for the positions. 

\[ \bar{x} = 2.1 \]
\[ \sigma = 2.8 \]

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never “on call” Always “on call”

Work on Holidays
Managed care pharmacists rarely work on holidays. 

\[ \bar{x} = 1.8 \]
\[ \sigma = 2.0 \]

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never work on holidays Always work on holidays

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. 

\[ \bar{x} = 3.2 \]
\[ \sigma = 2.8 \]

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never work on weekends Always work on weekends

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. 

\[ \bar{x} = 2.9 \]
\[ \sigma = 2.1 \]

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
None of my time All of my time
### Mean Scores for Critical Factors

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<td>1.</td>
<td>Interaction With Patients</td>
<td>4.2</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Conducting Physical Assessments</td>
<td>1.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Interpreting Laboratory Values</td>
<td>1.9</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Continuity of Relationships</td>
<td>3.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Helping People</td>
<td>5.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Collaboration With Other Professionals</td>
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<td>Problem Solving</td>
<td>4.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Focus of Expertise</td>
<td>4.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Innovative Thinking</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Applying Scientific Knowledge</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Applying Medical Knowledge</td>
<td>7.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Creating New Knowledge by Conducting Research</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Management/Supervision of Others</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Management/Supervision of a Business</td>
<td>2.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Pressure/Stress</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Work Schedule</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Part-Time Opportunities</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Job-Sharing Opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Exit/Re-entry Opportunities</td>
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<td>24.</td>
<td>Leisure/Family Time</td>
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<td>25.</td>
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<td>7.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Opportunities for Advancement</td>
<td>5.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Opportunities for Leadership Development</td>
<td>5.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Community Prestige</td>
<td>5.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>Professional Involvement</td>
<td>6.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>Income</td>
<td>7.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>Benefits (vacation, health, retirement)</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>Geographic Location</td>
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<td>2.9</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Reference


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.