Office-Based Medication Management

Background

Office-based medication management involves the role of those pharmacists who are actively providing medication management in a variety of ways including medication therapy management (MTM) programs. Some pharmacists specialize in a given disease state and are affiliated with a medical practice while others work out of their own office.

These practitioners also are positioned to be involved with accountable care organizations (ACOs) and patient-centered medical homes (PCMHs). Of interest is the complexity that may exist for billing of services provided. Many of the pharmacy associations are working together for pharmacists to become recognized as providers; provider status will help as practitioners will be able to have the appropriate coding and billing requirements.

Characteristics

Twenty-five office-based medication management pharmacists responded to the 2012 APhA Career Pathway Evaluation Program survey. Eighty-eight percent of respondents held an entry-level pharmacy degree; 81% held the PharmD degree, and 13% percent indicated that they also had a non-pharmacy bachelor’s degree.

Forty-two percent had been through a residency program, 42% had been through a certificate training program, and 6% reported having been through some form of other training.

Respondents’ average age was 44 years old. Eighty-one percent of respondents were female. Income data show 7% earn between $80,000–$100,000, while 64% earn $100,000 or more per year, with 7% earning greater than $150,000. The average time worked per week was 42 hours.

An overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with their job, with 54% indicating “extremely satisfied” and 38% indicating “somewhat satisfied.” Similarly, most respondents indicated that they felt the job was challenging, with 42% indicating “extremely challenging” and 54% indicating “somewhat challenging.”

Insider’s Perspective

What aspects of the job are most appealing?

Two specific areas of these roles were listed as the most appealing aspects by the respondents. Twenty-four percent cited direct patient care and the flexibility they have in scheduling. Working with other health care professionals and autonomy were listed by 12% of the respondents as appealing aspects. Respondents also indicated that they spend 35% of their time on patient care services focused on the medication aspects of care.

One respondent stated that “working with patients to review their current medications for optimal pharmaceutical care while reducing medication duplication, errors, and cost” is a
very appealing aspect of the role. Another added that “working one on one with patients and physicians” is appealing.

**What aspects of the job are least appealing?**
Income was cited by 12% of pharmacists as the least appealing aspect of their jobs. Even with the lower income, these pharmacists are satisfied with the work they perform. Some also mentioned they do not enjoy having to repeatedly explain the value of what they do.

**What advice should students and practitioners consider when selecting the option of becoming an office-based medication management pharmacist?**
Twelve percent of pharmacists cited three distinct areas to consider for a role in office-based medication management: the importance of keeping up on reading the literature, being able to work independently, and staying motivated in an office-based environment. This is especially true as most students do not get exposed to this practice environment during their academic training.

One respondent summed up what many indicated, stating the need to do “many hours of reading to stay current on most up-to-date guidelines to ensure evidence-based medication therapy management.” Another stated the need to have a “high level of resolve to diplomatically yet firmly act as patient advocate in applying the patient’s wishes and best clinical practices often in the face of opposition from prescribers and sometimes family members.”
Critical Factor Ratings

Interaction With People
Interaction with people was cited by some pharmacists as the most appealing aspect of their work. As noted earlier, respondents reported that they spend 35% of their time in patient-focused care.

= 6.7

Conducting Physical Assessments
Even with an office-based practice, these pharmacists conduct a low range of physical assessments. It should be noted that some of these pharmacists practice from a home-based office and communicate telephonically with patients.

= 3.8

Interpreting Laboratory Values
Of interest is the fact that many respondents indicated that they do have access to lab values as they are in constant contact with the patient's health care team.

= 4.9

Continuity of Relationships
The extent to which these pharmacists have ongoing or long-term relationships with patients varies. As noted earlier, working with patients is one of the more appealing aspects of this role, which links well to being upper mid-range in the responses.

= 6.3

Helping People
A pharmacist working in an office-based setting helps people in different ways. Sometimes the pharmacists work face-to-face with a patient, and other times they communicate via phone or e-mail.

= 6.2
Collaboration With Other Professionals
Office-based medication management pharmacists indicated that they are mid-range in collaborating with other professionals. However, there are those who indicated that this was a higher than average part of their work.

= 6.2

Educating Other Professionals
Pharmacists in an office-based environment have the opportunity to educate others in the practice. The response was mid-range for this critical factor.

= 5.0

Variety of Daily Activities
The day-to-day workload of an office-based pharmacist often depends on the medication-related needs of patients. As a result, there is a good deal of variation in their practices.

= 5.7

Multiple Task Handling
There was fairly good agreement among office-based pharmacists that they deal with more than one task at a time. They provided a mid-range score on this question.

= 6.4

Problem Solving
Pharmacists responding to the survey indicated that they are in the mid-range of the spectrum when it comes to problem solving. Some patients fit into a protocol that can be followed, however there are exceptions that require these pharmacists to problem solve situations.

= 5.0
Focus of Expertise
These pharmacists are mid-range when it comes to the focus of expertise. As mentioned
earlier, a few pharmacists are specialized in a specific disease state based in the office
environment.  

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\text{Generally defined area} & & & & & & & & & & \text{Sharply defined area}
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= 6.2

Innovative Thinking
Some settings are well established and have highly defined expectations, duties, and
responsibilities, whereas others will require innovative thinking to help shape and define the
practice. A higher mid-range response indicates that this group leans toward innovative
thinking in their practice setting.

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\text{Never involves innovative thinking} & & & & & & & & & & \text{Always involves innovative thinking}
\end{array}
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= 6.8

Applying Scientific Knowledge
Office-based pharmacists spend a good portion of their time applying scientific knowledge
in their area of expertise, giving this factor a rating of 6.7. This may be due to the other
health care providers that they work with and the ability to collaborate on patient care.

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\text{None of my time} & & & & & & & & & & \text{All of my time}
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= 6.7

Applying Medical Knowledge
Office-based pharmacists rated this as the highest-scored critical factor. They spend a great
amount of time applying medical knowledge in their field. This differs slightly from the
scientific knowledge as this relates more closely to the disease state medication management
in which they participate.

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\text{None of my time} & & & & & & & & & & \text{All of my time}
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= 8.6

Creating New Knowledge by Conducting Research
This was the second lowest-rated critical factor. There is little opportunity to conduct
research and participants place this in the low range of the scale at 3.7. Respondents spend
less than 1% of their time in research.

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\text{None of my time} & & & & & & & & & & \text{All of my time}
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= 3.7
Management/Supervision of Others
This factor was tied with the previous factor as being the second lowest-rated critical factor. A low range response from participants shows that this group is not very involved in the management and supervisory responsibilities of others. Depending on the practice setting, office-based pharmacists generally work with peers and other health professionals. Their level of supervision of others depends upon staffing levels with only 4% of their time spent in this area.

= 3.7

Management/Supervision of a Business
Many of the respondents indicated that they spend a minimal amount of time managing a business. Only 5% of respondents’ time is spent on business-related activities.

= 4.1

Pressure/Stress
Respondents indicated that they experience pressure/stress at the upper mid-level range level. All pharmacists experience some stress in their workday, which comes with responsibility. The types of pressures and stresses vary depending upon the practice environment.

= 6.7

Work Schedule
Office-based medication management pharmacists often work regular and predictable schedules. Scheduling was listed as one of the most appealing aspects of this role.

= 7.3
### Part-Time Opportunities
Office-based practice does have opportunities for part-time roles. This may be based on the fact that some of these positions are not full time; some practitioners work part time in the office environment and their other time is in different roles/settings for the company.

![Survey Results](no-opportunity-for-part-time-employment)

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<td>No opportunity for part-time employment</td>
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### Job-Sharing Opportunities
Job sharing is not a common practice in this field because many times the idea is to have a consistent person for patient-centered care, especially in a PCMH model.

![Survey Results](no-opportunity-for-job-sharing)

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<td>No opportunity for job-sharing</td>
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### Exit/Re-entry Opportunities
Because office-based practice continues to expand, there are opportunities to leave the area and then re-enter at an appropriate time.

![Survey Results](no-opportunity-for-exit-re-entry)

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<td>No opportunity for exit/re-entry</td>
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### Parental Leave Opportunities
Parental leave opportunities ranked higher than others in the areas of work-related options. Most employers provide the opportunity for parental leave.

![Survey Results](no-opportunity-for-parental-leave)

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<td>No opportunity for parental leave</td>
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### Leisure/Family Time
As these respondents indicated that they have regular/predictable hours, it relates well that they also feel that they have opportunities for leisure/family time.

![Survey Results](no-free-time)

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<tr>
<td>No free time</td>
<td>Always opportunities for free time</td>
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= 7.5
Job Security
As the health system continues to change, increased pressures for accountability of clinical services continues to be a challenge that the profession must tackle. Because this group is already working with ACOs and PCMHs, they are in a better position to continue the role. Nevertheless, the office-based pharmacists listed this critical factor in the mid-range.

![Score Chart](image)

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<td>No security/stability</td>
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Opportunities for Advancement
Pharmacists in an office-based environment have some opportunities for advancement. However, in many cases there is only one pharmacist who is providing the medication management services.

![Score Chart](image)

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Opportunities for Leadership Development
Respondents felt that they have opportunities for leadership development. As this historically is a nontraditional role, these practitioners have the opportunity to take a leadership role based on the smaller numbers of pharmacists who practice in this setting.

![Score Chart](image)

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<td>No opportunities for leadership development</td>
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= 7.4

Community Prestige
Pharmacists are well-respected health professionals. The extent to which their practice directly influences their prestige in the community depends on the visibility of their role to the general public.

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<td>Much less prestige than anyone else in the community</td>
<td>Much more prestige than others in the community</td>
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= 6.5
Professional Involvement
Active involvement in pharmacy meetings and events creates opportunities for professional
development and the sharing of ideas and knowledge among peers. The extent to which a
pharmacist gets involved is largely a personal decision, although these pharmacists indicated
that this critical factor is in the upper mid-range level.

= 7.6

Income
While office-based medication management pharmacists are in the upper mid-range on this
response, this was one of the least appealing aspects related to the environment.

= 7.0

Benefits (vacation, health, retirement)
Benefits often go hand-in-hand with salary. Most of the respondents indicated that they
receive a reasonable benefits package.

= 6.0

Geographic Location
Office-based practitioners are mid-range with regard to being able to practice in a number of
geographic locations.

= 4.9

Working Remotely
While many of these pharmacists work in an office environment, they do not feel that they
are working remotely on a regular basis. However, it must be noted that a few of the
respondents indicated that they work from home.

= 4.2
**Autonomy**
Autonomy was the third highest-rated critical factor. As a licensed professional, pharmacists have been granted certain authorities and accepted certain responsibilities; as a result, pharmacists generally have autonomy within the professional scope of practice. This was also listed as one of the more appealing aspects of the role.

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**Self-Worth**
Self-worth is the second highest-rated critical factor for these practitioners. Office-based medication management pharmacists have a career that fulfills personal and professional ideals. There is general agreement among these pharmacists that their practice creates self-worth.

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<td>Never allowed</td>
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**Future Focus**
Depending on the position, pharmacists can be on the cutting edge of science in their respective disciplines. In addition, many of these pharmacists are looking at a population health focus.

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<td>Focus on immediate task</td>
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**Professional Prestige**
Pharmacists in an office-based practice have opportunities to make a name for themselves through achievements in practice. Respondents were mid-range on their responses.

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**Unique Practice Environment**
This critical factor is in the upper range level. Office-based practice is a unique environment especially when compared with traditional community and institutional practice environments.

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**Advanced Degree**  
An advanced degree is not necessarily required to practice in an office-based medication management environment.  

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<td>Advanced degree not required</td>
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**Entrepreneurial Opportunity**  
The practice of a pharmacist in office-based practice is mid-range regarding entrepreneurial opportunities.  

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<td>Not at all</td>
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**Additional Training**  
If there is any one factor on which there is almost universal agreement, it is clear that some type of additional training is required for pharmacists to practice in an office-based medication management environment. Training for this environment is related to the operations and process of patient-based scheduled appointments.  

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**Interacting With Colleagues**  
Respondents indicated that they tend to interact with coworkers. Of interest is that the colleagues may or may not be pharmacists.  

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<tr>
<td>None of my time</td>
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**Travel**  
Travel was the lowest-rated critical factor. For the most part, these positions have lower needs to travel for day-to-day activities.  

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<td>None of my time</td>
<td>All of my time</td>
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Writing
Respondents were in the mid-range regarding writing. Some were more inclined to include the writing they needed to prepare for the documentation of the medication management that they performed.

= 4.4

Working With Teams
Respondents tend to have some team-related projects. This makes sense based on the setting and a PCMH environment.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean Scores for Critical Factors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Interaction With People</td>
<td>6.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Conducting Physical Assessments</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Interpreting Laboratory Values</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Continuity of Relationships</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Helping People</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Collaboration With Other Professionals</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Educating Other Professionals</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Variety of Daily Activities</td>
<td>5.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Multiple Task Handling</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Problem Solving</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Focus of Expertise</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Innovative Thinking</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Applying Scientific Knowledge</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Applying Medical knowledge</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Creating New Knowledge by Conducting Research</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Management/Supervision of Others</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Management/Supervision of a Business</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Pressure/Stress</td>
<td>6.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>19. Work Schedule</td>
<td>7.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. Part-Time Opportunities</td>
<td>4.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>21. Job-Sharing Opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td>22. Exit/Re-entry Opportunities</td>
<td>5.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>23. Parental Leave Opportunities</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Leisure/Family Time</td>
<td>7.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>25. Job Security</td>
<td>5.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>26. Opportunities for Advancement</td>
<td>5.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>27. Opportunities for Leadership Development</td>
<td>7.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>28. Community Prestige</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Professional Involvement</td>
<td>7.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>30. Income</td>
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<tr>
<td>31. Benefits (vacation, health, retirement)</td>
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<tr>
<td>32. Geographic Location</td>
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<tr>
<td>33. Working Remotely</td>
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<td>34. Autonomy</td>
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<td>35. Self-Worth</td>
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<td>36. Future Focus</td>
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<tr>
<td>37. Professional Prestige</td>
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<tr>
<td>38. Unique Practice Environment</td>
<td>7.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>39. Advanced Degree</td>
<td>4.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>40. Entrepreneurial Opportunity</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. Additional Training</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. Interacting With Colleagues</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. Travel</td>
<td>2.7</td>
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<td>44. Writing</td>
<td>4.4</td>
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<td>45. Working With Teams</td>
<td>6.1</td>
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</table>
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Professional Organizations

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American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP)
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