

Preparing for Careers in Hospitals and Health Systems

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing this chapter, readers should be able to:

1. Identify what training and skills are necessary to succeed in hospital and health-system pharmacy practice.
2. Compare the various training and educational options for hospital and health-system pharmacy practice.
3. Contrast graduate education with residencies and other forms of experiential training.

KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

- **American Pharmacists Association (APhA) Career Pathway Evaluation Program:** The program that provides a process for exploring pharmacy careers and offers resources for making informed career decisions.

- **ASHP Midyear Clinical Meeting and Exhibition:** A national annual meeting in December where individuals interested in post-graduate training can attend the Residency Showcase.
- **Curriculum vitae (CV):** Detailed information about an individual's job qualifications and experiences. It differs from a resume because it is typically longer and more detailed (more than two pages).
- **Internship:** On-the-job training experience for students enrolled in pharmacy school.
- **Portfolio:** A collection of information about an individual designed to provide a comprehensive picture of experience, accomplishments, and training. It typically contains actual work completed, for example, a written project or poster presentation that can showcase one's capabilities.
- **Resume:** Document summarizing relevant education, training, and job experience. It differs from a CV because it is short (one or two pages).

INTRODUCTION

Students often start pharmacy school with just a vague idea about where they will practice after graduation. Initial career plans often evolve as they progress through their professional education. The curricula at pharmacy schools exposes them to the vast variety of options available within the profession.

Pharmacists can practice in independent community pharmacies, super markets, corporate pharmacy chains, mass merchandisers, mail order pharmacies, specialty pharmacies, hospitals, long-term care facilities, government institutions, managed care settings, and many other locations. The career choices within each of these locations (e.g., clinical pharmacist, manager, specialist) make choosing a career path quite challenging.

Successful student pharmacists begin by taking an early and active role in career planning. They sample their options by shadowing practicing pharmacists; working part-time as interns in pharmacies; volunteering in clinics that provide care to medically underserved communities; becoming involved in student organizations that offer service learning opportunities; and actively networking with classmates, professors, and practitioners.

KEY POINT . . .

Your ability to identify and compete for hospital and health-system practice positions is influenced by steps you take in pharmacy school.

. . . SO WHAT?

If you have no idea what you want to do with your life upon graduation, you may be at a serious disadvantage in regard to your career. Many of your classmates and colleagues have been taking steps to prepare for a career in hospital and health-system pharmacy practice. They have chosen their coursework and practice experiences to teach them concepts and skills that will prepare them to practice. They have built a resume of experiences and accomplishments that differentiate themselves from other potential job candidates. They have interviewed for residencies and other jobs in hospital and health-system practice and probably have offers in hand. However, if you are still at least a year or two from graduation, you still have time to take the steps that can help you obtain a career in hospital and health-system pharmacy practice.

PLANNING A CAREER PATH

So, how do you know which career paths might be right for you? The steps are relatively straightforward:

1. Assess your personal strengths and weaknesses.
2. Develop an understanding about yourself and the kind of life you want to live.
3. Learn about different career choices and how they match your strengths and weaknesses.
4. Think about how different career choices lead to the kind of life you want to live.
5. Chose a direction and start taking steps toward your chosen career path.

The self-assessment steps 1 through 3 are necessary for the completion of steps 4 and 5. Indeed, it is difficult to choose the right career without knowing about yourself and what you want in a career. Therefore, self-assessment is essential. Students consider the self-assessment suggestions in the following discussion.

Take Time for Personal Reflection

Turn off your mobile device, computer, gaming device, and any other electronic or non-electronic distraction and reflect upon your work, education, and daily activities. Analyze your daily activities, your choices, and outcomes of your choices. Did things turn out the way you planned or hoped? Did you achieve anything of importance, have fun, or learn anything new? What were the day's highlights and lows? Did anything surprise you or challenge your personal assumptions? How would you do the day differently if you had a chance?

Taking time for personal reflection is a way for individuals to think seriously about what they are doing with their lives and their paths. It also helps them consider alternatives to their current career paths.