



**ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER**

**Pharmacy**

**PHARMACY PROFESSION: ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATION**

**KEY WORDS:** Education, Training, certification, pharmacist

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**ABSTRACT**  
 Pharmacists are the third biggest healthcare professional group in the world, behind physicians and nurses. Pharmacists play vital and diverse role in healthcare, from research and manufacture of medicines to drug dispensation and patient counseling. Nowadays, pharmacy profession continues to evolve, as pharmacists are increasingly involved in patient monitoring and consultation with other members of the healthcare team on drug decisions and patient management. At present pharmacy education, training and certification lacking most of the standards including patient oriented practice that are of prime consideration in profession. Due to this neither pharmacists nor pharmacy technicians will be able to effectively and safely meet the full range of medication use nor might safety needs of the public and faces problems in dispensing, counseling and prone to medication errors. In respect to this; expansion of pharmacist responsibilities to a more consultative, patient-focused role has increased workforce demand and highlighted the need for educational, training and certification reform. In this connection, article emphasizes on the current status of pharmacist with respect to education, training and certification, need for a model curriculum and core guidelines, promotion of comprehensive education development and achievement of competencies in global pharmacy practice that will have a positive impact on public safety and the practice of pharmacy.

**INTRODUCTION**

“Pharmacy is health professional that links pharmacy profession with chemical science and is charged with ensuring effective and safe use of pharmaceutical drugs.” A profession is an occupation which necessitates widespread training along with study and mastery of specific information and generally has professional association, ethical code and procedure for certification or licensing<sup>1</sup>. The profession of pharmacy has been continuously shaped and reshaped as its boundaries of focus and responsibilities have evolved for over century.

The primary focus of the profession of pharmacy, the world over, has shifted from a technical, product-oriented to patient-oriented, professional service. Unfortunately, despite India excelling in all other industries, the health care industry has been very slow on the uptake of pharmacist as an integral tool in improving health services. Hence, there is need for a drastic change to make India a healthier nation, a developed nation which could only be happened when all health care professionals work hand in hand. This mainly includes providing the medicines to the public with appropriate advice and professional counseling.<sup>1,2</sup>

To achieve due recognition of pharmacist as a health care professional, pharmacy education and course curriculum at diploma/degree level should be restructured to meet the needs of present day health care.<sup>2</sup> Practical training under the supervision of an experienced clinical pharmacist can help to give good exposure to the students to the real life practical problems as well as to develop confidence and good communication skills in order to solve the medication related problems in future. Thus, it is the responsibility of pharmacy educators to supply professionally and legally qualified pharmacists. For the health care chain to complete, pharmacists need to be competent and ready to embrace new challenges to develop their professional role. Creating a responsible pharmacist through education and community service will go a long way in providing health care to humanity as they offer endless opportunities for serving mankind.<sup>2,3,4</sup>

**CURRENT STATUS OF PHARMACY PROFESSION<sup>5</sup>**

Currently there are over a million pharmacists in India with around

55% of them in community, 20% in hospital, 10% in industry and regulatory and 2% in academia. In India, formal pharmacy education leading to a degree began in 1937, with the introduction of a 3--\_year industry – oriented Bachelor of Pharmacy course. We have today 6 lacs pharmacists in the country, of which 5 lacs are in community pharmacy. Diploma holders largely handle the pharmacy profession and the providing of quality pharmaceutical care is still a dream.

**Status Of Pharmacy Education, Training And Certification<sup>6,7,8</sup>**

**1. Education at the Glance**

The Pharmacy education in our country has witnessed tremendous expansion in last one decade. However, the standard in education has been eroded by rising tides of mediocrity. There is an urgent need to initiate an academic exercise aimed at attaining revamping of curriculum, keeping in pace with current and emerging trends in the field of pharmacy.

To meet the varying needs of the profession at different levels the following pharmacy programs are offered in India today:  
 Diploma in Pharmacy (D. Pharm. 2yrs & 3 month practical training),  
 Bachelor of Pharmacy (B. Pharm. 4yrs course)  
 Master of Pharmacy (M. Pharm. 2yr course; specialization),  
 Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm. D. 6yrs)  
 Doctor of Philosophy in Pharmacy (Ph. D 3yr after M.pharm).

In India Pharmacy Education is a two-tier system. After 12<sup>th</sup> science of state Board one can decide one of the two courses, either Diploma (D.Pharm) or Degree (B.Pharm) and diploma students can directly apply to second year degree. The Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) is the national agency for the accreditation of professional degree programs in pharmacy and providers of continuing pharmacy education. The core curriculum includes pathophysiology, pharmacology, therapeutics, clinical problem solving, laboratory monitoring, and physical assessment skills for many diseases.

To practice as a pharmacist in India, one needs at least a diploma in pharmacy, which is awarded after 2 years and 3 months of

pharmacy studies and practical training. These diploma-trained pharmacists are currently the mainstay of pharmacy practice in India.

**2. TRAINING<sup>9</sup>**

Training is mandatory to D.Pharm for period of three months (750hr) any pharmacy shop. No compulsory training in the hospital or industry setting for B.Pharm course.

**3. CERTIFICATION**

Present registrable qualification under the pharmacy act is D.Pharm and B.Pharm and should be renewed with specific period. Certification is process much reliable in India as compared to other countries. Countries including US, Australia, Britain and other include national examination to become registered pharmacist.

A pharmacist registered under the Pharmacy Act -1948 should renew his/her registration by the due date to retain his/her name on the Register of Pharmacists maintained by this office of Maharashtra State pharmacy Council (MSPC). If pharmacist fails to pay his/her renewal fee by the due date his/her name is removed from the register of pharmacists under this act.<sup>10</sup>

**Need for reform of education, training and certification<sup>11,12</sup>**

The present pharmacy profession needs drastic changes to make it more patient-oriented. In the present day and age where getting an appointment with a doctor is tedious and expensive, pharmacists have a great opportunity to upgrade their services and develop a professional image rather than grocer image it has been carrying out from decades. Pharmacists play a crucial role in any health system as they are responsible for providing solution related to medication. Evolution in the education, training, scope of practice, job responsibilities, and career opportunities for pharmacy; has increased workforce demand and highlighted the need for restructuring of pharmacy profession. The need for reformation includes:

- Lack of adequate drug information due to educational standards, poor documentation and poor funding.
- Due to expanded pharmacist responsibilities to consultation, patient-focused and clinical service.
- The Widespread sale of prescription drugs over the counter
- To acquire practical knowledge and satisfy need for GPP.
- To improve basic knowledge and the rational drug therapy for common diseases.
- Owing to rapid growth and diversification of the pharma industry.
- Due to dispensing by non-registered pharmacist and misuse of licenses.

**Current Issues Of Pharmacy Profession<sup>8,12,13</sup>**

- The issues surrounding the roles, responsibilities, education, training, and regulation of pharmacy technicians – even what to call this type of pharmacy “worker” -- have challenged the pharmacy profession for decades.
- Lacking of course curriculum at diploma, bachelor and postgraduate level to meet the health care needs of the today. As since from 1991 there was no change in academic syllabus.
- Delivery and impact of clinical pharmacy services in pharmacy practice settings.
- Implementation of Patient counselling in practice.
- Training compulsion to in hospital, chemist and industry to all courses of pharmacy.
- Certification and re-licensure of pharmacist.
- Major issue of providing licensure to the personnel having both qualification as physician and pharmacist.
- Dispensing of prescription by a regd. Pharmacist only as per Pharmacy Act 1948; and under the supervision of a registered pharmacist as per Drugs and Cosmetics rule is the major issue.

**Recommendations To Pharmacy Profession<sup>14,15,16</sup>**

- Reformation of pharmacy education and course curriculum with introducing subjects like pharmacy practice and clinical pharmacy in the present curriculum to fulfill the health care

needs of the today.

- Specialization in pharmacy education either from very beginning or in last two years like B.pharm in Hospital Pharmacy, Community Pharmacy, Clinical Pharmacy, Pharmacy Practice etc. so that students will be more skilled.
- The implementation of industry-academia interactions to give strong practical exposures to generate competent future pharmacists with sound knowledge.
- Implementation of compulsion of practical training to bachelor and post-graduation.
- Setting standards for conduct, ethics, proficiency, education and training, and continuing professional development (CPD).
- Reinforcing legislation related to Emily's act (The Pharmacy Technician Training and Registration Act of 2008) that includes training and registering; pharmacy technicians have to qualify the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board exam.
- Strict implementation of licensure or certification of pharmacy graduates through a national exam before they can enter practice and need standardization of re-licensure processes.
- Legislation to allow implementation of mandatory continuing education credits for license renewal.
- Additional accredited specialty training to receive prescribing privileges to pharmacist.
- Implementation of concept of separate individualized counselling areas.
- Legislation and strict implementation of dispensing by registered pharmacist only.

**CONCLUSION**

The current era of globalization has witnessed evolution in the professions of pharmacy. Reformation in quality pharmaceutical education, training and certification meet the challenges and needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century. Development at grass root level is required to renovate the course content and to make it more patients oriented. The changing global scenario and adherence to ethical rules; overcoming the issues and implementing recommendations will establish the pharmacy profession as a noble one for the welfare of society.

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