A Relevant New Undergraduate Track in Retail Pharmacy Management

Philip W. McGinn Jr.
School of Health Professions, Long Island University, Brooklyn Campus, Brooklyn NY 11201-5372

Peter G. Fitzpatrick
Arnold and Marie Schwartz College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, Long Island University, 75 DeKalb Avenue at University plaza, Brooklyn NY 11201

An undergraduate track in retail pharmacy management was designed to better prepare pharmacy students for the future responsibilities of retail pharmacy management. The curriculum was developed so that it would meet every day needs that exist in community pharmacy. Several types of curriculum assessment were utilized to assure that there was a bridge between procedural and outcome dimensions of the new curriculum. Multiple teaching approaches were used and student involvement in the learning experiences was maximized. Student responses to the track course offerings were quite positive and, as a result, enrollments in the track have substantially increased in recent years. A survey was sent to students who graduated from the track and their responses were extremely positive. Their recommendations on course improvement were minimal. The College of Pharmacy is dedicated to the continued implementation of the new track.

INTRODUCTION

The traditional role of the pharmacist is rapidly changing. Seldom do we witness the pharmacist working in the nostalgic, small local pharmacy. Rather, the current practice of pharmacy places much greater emphasis on health care delivery and requires a good working knowledge of managed care, reimbursement, outcomes research, and a sophisticated knowledge of management. Currently, the curriculum in Schools of Pharmacy concentrates primarily on the scientific and technical knowledge the pharmacist must have in order to counsel patients and gives limited attention to the practical management skills. While there has been an attempt by a few schools to effect a change, this inclusion has been slow and thus most pharmacy graduates are not adequately prepared for managerial responsibilities. Further evidence of this deficit was gathered by the authors during informal conversations with many chain drug executives. Their frequent lament was that pharmacy graduates had little or no understanding of basic retail management concepts.

The educational need identified by the chain drug executives was echoed by community pharmacy owners who besieged the college with requests that the education and training of pharmacists be re-oriented so that, upon completing their studies and passing State Board Examinations, graduates can assume a more managerial role in community pharmacy. For these reasons, a new undergraduate track in retail pharmacy management was developed and implemented at our college of pharmacy. Following are desired outcomes of the program. Upon completion of the undergraduate track in retail pharmacy management, the student shall be able to:

1. conduct a site analysis for a community pharmacy; conduct a demographic survey of a defined neighborhood; prepare a store floor plan and merchandising plan; know what the elements of, and how to negotiate a lease; and complete and submit all necessary applications and permits;
2. establish and efficiently manage pharmacy purchasing and inventory control systems;
3. supervise cash flow, discounting of bills, return on investment, double entry accounting systems, capital budgets, operating budgets, federal and state mandated business income and withholding fillings, and long and short term financing.
4. effectively recruit, select, and train personnel; understand compensation, benefits, and motivation in the workplace;
5. be able to demonstrate applications of computer technology and how it relates to record keeping, DUR, DUE, and third party processing. To be able to analyze switch technology, on-line transmissions, community health information networks, electronic data interchange, software/hardware platforms, pharmacy informatics, and access channels; and
6. to demonstrate needed communication skills and know how they impact on customer and professional relations, effective management, and external marketing.

The courses are taken in the third, fourth, and fifth years of study, comprising an elective portion of the undergraduate curriculum. Appendix A contains the curriculum and the course outlines for the track in Retail Pharmacy Management.

Curriculum Development

Chickering(1) noted that, if curriculum should be related to everyday life in a broad sense, then “... it is necessary to forge links between that life and actual curricular components.” Levine(2) states that a successful curriculum change is more likely when the recipients believe that they will directly or indirectly receive something valuable from their
participant in it.

The curriculum for the track in Retail pharmacy Management was developed along these principles. It was designed to be comprehensive but practical in nature and related to real life experiences each student would undergo after graduation.

FORMULATION AND APPROVAL SYSTEM

The curriculum was formulated as a result of a team effort in which faculty members of the Pharmacy Administration department, the Dean of the College, the President of the Retail Drug Institute(1), three practicing community pharmacists who serve on the College’s Council of Overseers and are active in state and local pharmacy associations as well as the College’s continuing education programs, and one student officer from each of the three professional years, collaborated to prepare a curriculum designed to meet the needs of the students aspiring to enter either independent or chain community practice.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE CURRICULUM

The curriculum was developed according to the six curricular dimensions expressed by Berquist(3), namely:

**Time.** The duration and the schedule of the instructional units. The track was assigned 15 credit hours of instruction based upon the time it was felt would be necessary to have the students achieve the aforementioned competencies. This determination was largely based on the comparisons with similar free standing electives given at both our College and other colleges of pharmacy.

**Space.** The use of areas of instruction that are located both on and off the college campus. Off campus sites include: independent and chain community pharmacies, pharmaceutical manufacturers headquarters, regional wholesalers, and a variety of college libraries.

**Resources.** The instructional use of people, materials, and situations on and off campus. Some class sessions are held in practice sites and the academic is made experiential by having the students perform management and marketing activities.

**Organization.** The arrangement and the sequencing of instructional units and the arrangement of the academic units.

**Procedure.** The planning, implementing, evaluating, and crediting of educational units.

**Outcome.** Clearly defining the desired end results of a particular instructional unit or an academic part of the program. These outcomes correlate to the stated outcomes previously discussed.

The curriculum has a certain uniqueness in that it was developed and taught not only by faculty members of the College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, but also by practicing community pharmacy practitioners and selected faculty from the School of Business and Public Administration and Accountancy. All instructors in the track combined lecture, discussion, and on site role simulation in their instructional methodology.

The curriculum developed is a combination of the competency-based, experience-based, and student-based curriculum innovations. The students were required to acquire and demonstrate specific competencies in pharmacy management prior to graduation: educational experiences were to be provided both on the campus and in pharmacies; and conditions were created for students to acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes appropriate to their future work in pharmacy. The demonstration of these competencies by the students was accomplished by written examinations, research reports, situational role playing and its evaluation, and the students anecdotal observations.

INVolVEMENT OF THE INSTITUTION

The institution had been aware of the need for an undergraduate track in retail pharmacy for many years and actively encouraged the College of Pharmacy to take the steps necessary to develop the track.

In order that the project not be accomplished in isolation, a broad participation by key members of the institution in the development of the curriculum was encouraged. Members of the faculty, administration, trustees, overseers, and outside practitioners, who had expressed an interest in serving on a steering committee, were contacted and asked to serve because of their expertise and willingness to participate.

PLANNING THE NEW PROGRAM

The planning of the new track involved the design of the track and then the plans for implementing the new program for the college. It included determination of the key members of the team, the approval system to be followed, and the assignment of the initial responsibility for implementing the program. Students who expressed a strong interest in the track were included as part of the planning group.

The nature of the students, the objectives of the curriculum and the student learning experiences were carefully considered in the planning process. This consideration took the form of balancing in course design the academic and experiential components. Students expressed a preference both from learning and utility perspectives to have the courses as experiential as possible. This preference was acknowledged and was carefully interwoven with the requisite academic considerations.

Appropriate learning methods (i.e., lectures, class workshops, video presentations, demonstration, role-playing, case studies, field visits, field research projects, and other) were designed according to the type of course to be taught and the determined learning behavior to be achieved. For example, in the Personnel Planning & Management Course (PHA 587), students review actual applications (identity blinded) submitted to a retail drug company. They learn to evaluate and critique applications and then fill out their own applications. These applications are used during role-play-

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1The Institute is a unit of the College which was established to provide students and practitioners with training in the economic, financial, and managerial aspects of community pharmacy; additional information about the Institute can be obtained by contacting the College. The President of the Institute was an administrative position created to oversee the activities of the organization. Currently, these duties are performed by the Director of the Pharmacy Administration Division.

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Table I. Student enrollments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Enrollment in all courses</th>
<th>Number who completed the track</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991-1992</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992-1993</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993-1994</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A climate for teaching of track courses was created in order to make the experience enjoyable and rewarding to the teaching staff. Openness, trust and mutual collaboration were created primarily by giving all involved a sense of proprietorship about the project. Multiple teaching-learning techniques utilized in teaching the track courses were positively assessed by the students who are learning approaches to the practice of pharmacy unavailable to pharmacy students in previous classes. The students who complete the track are awarded a certificate in Retail Pharmacy Management by the Retail Drug Institute at the College’s Commencement.

**References**


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**APPENDIX A. THE UNDERGRADUATE TRACK IN RETAIL PHARMACY MANAGEMENT (COURSE DESCRIPTIONS)**

**PHA 384 Communication Skills in Pharmacy Practice**
A basic communications course for pharmacy with special emphasis in managerial communications. Topics include: the communication process, management through communications, communication criteria and message effectiveness, the planning, organization, and development of business messages and communication of ideas, feelings, and attitudes. Three lecture hours. Three credits.

**PHA 486 Pharmacy Marketing Management**
This course is designed to develop an in-depth understanding of retail marketing in pharmacy. Topics include: analyzing market potential, the product mix in pharmacy, consumer behavior, merchandising, advertising and promotion, and the development of price structure strategies. Three lecture hours. Three credits.

**PHA 585 Pharmacy Operations Management I: Planning and Establishing a Community Pharmacy**
This course provides a comprehensive introduction to the fundamental decisions and actions required of management in planning the establishment of a community pharmacy. Topics include: location analysis, space and fixture needs, capital requirements and sources of funding, lease considerations, and pharmacy layout. Three lecture hours. Three credits.

**PHA 586 Pharmacy Operations Management II: Purchasing, Inventory Control, Financial Analysis and Control**
This course focuses on the key issues of financial and inventory management in community pharmacy. Topics include: record-keeping systems, financial systems and their analysis, budgeting and cash flow, internal control procedures, criteria for selecting suppliers, and inventory control. Three lecture hours. Three credits.
PHA 587  Pharmacy Operations Management III: Human Resources Management
This course focuses on the human resources management aspects of community pharmacy. Topics include: staffing needs, recruitment, selection, orientation and training, motivational theory, evaluation and compensation, employee relations and rights, and legal policies and procedures. Three lecture hours. Three credits.