Part 4: Professional satisfaction and the priorities to advance the pharmacy profession

Neil J. MacKinnon, BSc(Pharm), MSc(Pharm), PhD, FCSHP; Derek Jorgenson, BSP, PharmD, FCSHP; Jonathan Penm, BPharm(Hons), PhD; Jennifer Smith, MA

THIS IS THE FOURTH OF 5 SHORT PAPERS REPORTING the results of a survey of pharmacy leaders and professionals from a broad range of practice settings and geographic locations across Canada. Ninety-six individuals who were invited to attend the Pharmacy Thought Leadership Summit on June 23–24, 2016, in Calgary, Alberta, were also invited to complete the survey prior to the summit meeting. The goal of the summit was to reach agreement on priorities and actions that the Canadian Pharmacists Association (CPhA) can take forward with partner organizations to achieve an optimal future for pharmacy practice—a future that reflects the aspirations of pharmacy professionals and the health care needs of Canadians. Additional details on the methodology have been published previously.¹

In part 3 of this series,² we shared the results of what pharmacy technicians perceived to be the main indicators of professional satisfaction. This article reports the professional satisfaction responses from the 96 pharmacy professionals who were invited to attend the Summit meeting in Calgary (Table 1). Of the summit participants

invited to complete the survey, 64 responded to this section of the questionnaire, for a response rate of 67%.

A majority of respondents felt that each of the 9 indicators of professional satisfaction was *very important* or *important*. Notably, all respondents agreed that “adequate staffing in the workplace” is *very important* or *important*. This echoes results from other questions in the survey about workplace barriers to the provision of patient care services.^{2–4} The second highest indicator of professional satisfaction was “support to offer advanced services.”

Previous research has observed a significant positive relationship between pharmacist job satisfaction and (1) perceived utilization of skills and (2) adequate staffing.⁵ The authors of the study concluded, “one factor that may be contributing to dissatisfaction among pharmacists is their inability to use their skills while on the job.”⁵ Some of the quotes provided by the respondents of this survey support these assertions.

Ability to find ways to expand scope in light of cost containment in the industry and pressures

Pharmacies need to be adequately staffed in order to offer advanced services.

TABLE 1 Indicators of professional satisfaction

What value do you place on each of these as indicators of professional satisfaction today?	Very important/important* (% , n = 64)
Adequate staffing in the workplace	100.0
Support to offer advanced services	98.4
Continuing education opportunities	95.3
Innovation in the workplace	95.3
Professional autonomy (e.g., employer/payer influence on service provision)	90.6
Opportunities for advancement	89.1
New technology in the workplace	89.1
Role delineation in the workplace	71.9

*The percentage of respondents who rated the item as *very important* or *important* on a 1 to 5 Likert-type scale.

TABLE 2 Key priorities to advance the profession over the next 10 years

What do you feel are priorities to advance the profession of pharmacy over the next 10 years?	Very important/important* (% , n = 64)
Integration of expanded scope into daily practice	100.0
Development of reimbursement framework	96.9
Increased payer support for the role evolution of pharmacy professionals	95.3
Increased patient/general public support for the role evolution of pharmacy professionals	95.3
Increased government/regulators' support for the role evolution of pharmacy professionals	93.8
Opportunities for interprofessional collaboration	93.8
Increased support among other health care providers for the role evolution of pharmacy professionals	92.2
Expansion of reimbursement framework	89.1
Continued research on the value of pharmacists	85.9
Opportunities for interprofessional education/training	79.7
Professional credentialing of specialization	50.0

*The percentage of respondents who rated the item as *very important* or *important* on a 1 to 5 Likert-type scale.

as the volume of scripts has expanded. New ways of handling script volume need to take hold and payment for services must also grow. —Pharmacist respondent

Collaborative practice models and expanded scopes of practice are seen as necessary for having a meaningful impact on patient

care, and so [are] key to satisfaction. — Pharmacist respondent

The respondents were also asked for their input regarding the key priorities to advance the profession over the next decade (Table 2). A majority of respondents agreed that each of the 11 items presented to them in the survey

question are *very important* or *important*, with “professional credentialing of specialization” having the least amount of support. Interestingly, 100% of respondents felt that “integration of expanded scope into daily practice” was *very important* or *important*; thus, it was deemed to be the top priority for the profession moving forward. Many of the written comments provided by the respondents supported this.

Participants had an opportunity to provide additional comments in this section of the questionnaire, which helped to provide context to the quantitative results in Tables 1 and 2.

Regulatory changes are needed to empower pharmacists to act as decision makers in the use of medications rather than simply carrying out the decisions of others (e.g., physician prescribers). The reimbursement model must support this by paying pharmacists to provide comprehensive medication management

services rather than [being] medication providers. —Pharmacist respondent

Business needs to let professionals be professionals. Pharmacists need to be given autonomy so that they can make decisions and use appropriate resources so that care is focused on the patient, to improve outcomes. Currently, business seems satisfied with trying to minimize risk of harm and inserting the provision of services where the ROI [return on investment] is quick and evident. Patient health outcomes seem secondary. — Pharmacist respondent

In this fourth article in our series on the summit, we have shared the insights we have gathered from pharmacy professionals on the key influencers of their professional satisfaction and their priorities to advance the profession forward over the next decade. In our fifth and final article, coming in the next issue of *CPJ*, we will describe their future vision for the profession of pharmacy.⁶ ■

Editorial note

Throughout this series of articles, the authors have carefully enumerated perspectives of diverse thought leaders across the profession. The data are rich and should alert us to the multiple opportunities to support pharmacists in managing change. Importantly, these authors have identified that no single organization or part of the profession can steer the change management process for the profession. Each arm of the profession—regulatory bodies, educational institutions, professional associations, employers and so forth—has a unique series of levers that they can potentially apply to shift incentives and advance practice, but no one arm of the profession can do it alone. A central question posed across this series of articles remains: how can we get these multiple parts of the profession to actually work together and align their activities in a positive and productive way?

—Zubin Austin
University of Toronto

References

1. Intergage Consulting Group Inc. *Research report. Toward an optimal future: priorities for action*. Ottawa (ON): Canadian Pharmacists Association; 2016. Available: https://www.pharmacists.ca/cpha-ca/assets/File/pharmacy-in-canada/Thought%20Leadership%20Summit%20Research%20Report_01.pdf (accessed Jan. 3, 2017).
2. MacKinnon NJ, Penm J, Jorgenson D, Smith J. Part 3: perspectives of pharmacy technicians on practice change. *Can Pharm J (Ott)* 2017;150:239-42.
3. Penm J, Jorgenson D, MacKinnon NJ, Smith J. Part 1: barriers to the advancement of the pharmacy profession. *Can Pharm J (Ott)* 2017;150:150-2.
4. Penm J, MacKinnon NJ, Jorgenson D, Smith J. Part 2: roles and expertise needed to move the profession forward and improve health outcomes. *Can Pharm J (Ott)* 2017;150:153-5.
5. Cox ER, Fitzpatrick V. Pharmacists' job satisfaction and perceived utilization of skills. *Am J Health-Syst Pharm* 1999;56:1733-7.
6. Jorgenson D, Penm J, MacKinnon NJ, Smith J. Part 5: Future vision for the pharmacy profession. *Can Pharm J (Ott)* 2017;150(6). In press.