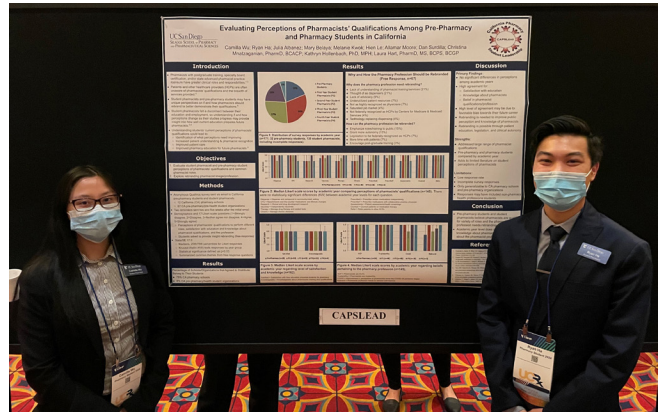


Evaluating Perceptions of Pharmacists' Qualifications Among Pharmacists, Other Health Care Professionals, Student Pharmacists and the Public in California

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Objectives

Objectives were to 1) evaluate perceptions of pharmacists' qualifications among pharmacists, non-pharmacist health care professionals (HCPs) including physicians, nurses and other clinical providers, student pharmacists and the public; and 2) to explore the need to rebrand the pharmacy profession.

Methods

A cross-sectional Qualtrics survey containing Likert and free response questions was constructed. Pharmacists from San Diego hospitals, HCPs representing five major health care institutions and one nursing organization in San Diego, and students from nine California pharmacy schools and seven pre-pharmacy undergraduate organizations were surveyed through email listservs. Public surveys were in-person at local public libraries. The survey took approximately five minutes to complete. Respondent groups were compared using Kruskal-Wallis and post-hoc testing was done using STATA-16 (College Station, Texas).

Results

There were no perception differences among pharmacists

($n = 113$) by practice setting regarding their profession. Practicing and retired pharmacists reported pharmacists were qualified to counsel and dispense medications but also recognized potential benefits associated with rebranding the profession. Non-pharmacist HCPs ($n = 56$) differed in opinion about pharmacist qualifications to independently screen for and administer vaccines ($p = 0.005$), perform patient assessments and health screenings ($p = 0.02$), and initiate, adjust and/or discontinue drug therapy ($p = 0.01$). Pharmacy students ($n = 171$), independent of program year, agreed pharmacists were well-qualified, and that rebranding is needed to improve public perception and knowledge of the varied pharmacist roles. The public ($n = 80$) was unaware of pharmacists' abilities to manage drug therapy, perform tests, and manage chronic diseases, as well as to prescribe certain medications independently. There were no significant differences among public perceptions by education level.

Conclusions

Many non-pharmacist HCPs and public participants were unaware of the varied skills and qualifications of pharmacists. Rebranding the profession or outreach education is warranted to increase recognition and understanding of the full breadth of clinical skills and services pharmacists can provide.