

OPPORTUNITIES IN

PHARMACY

Each year countless new medications and medical products are placed on the market. Both the patient and the physician expect the pharmacist to be knowledgeable about them. Consequently, a pharmacist's education continues long after the day he or she graduates from a university. Pharmacy is an art and science concerned with ensuring patients receive quality pharmaceuticals and experience optimal benefit from the medications they use.

Your career as a Pharmacist will assist over 200 million people who pass through America's pharmacies each week. Today, the pharmacist is assuming even greater direct patient-care responsibilities. The pharmacist is the first source of advice and assistance when common health problems arise. The pharmacist is in a strategic position to prevent medication interactions, to advise of side effects, to provide disease state management for diseases such as asthma and diabetes, to improve drug therapy compliance and even to provide some vaccines. The pharmacist is a respected community leader and business professional who, because of his/her high visibility, is a well-known member of the community.

Health System Pharmacy is one of the most rapidly expanding areas open to pharmacists today. Health system pharmacists work closely with the medical and health system administrative staff. Pharmacists are consultants on drug dosing, pain management, appropriate drug therapy, see patients with the physician, compound prescriptions, and serve as an instructor to medical residents, nurses, interns, and other members of the health system staff. In addition, they serve on many health-system committees. The opportunities for advancement in this rapidly expanding branch of the profession are limited only by the ambition of the person.

Certain personal qualifications are needed for a successful career in pharmacy. You should enjoy studying, not only during school, but also in seeking out opportunities to strengthen your knowledge on your own time. Liking people and being able to relate well to them are key factors in finding satisfaction in a career in pharmacy. An aptitude for science and mathematics is very helpful.

College preparatory should be your high school program. It should include English, mathematics, and sciences, preferably with some laboratory experience. Some schools require completion of specific subjects in high school such as two years of mathematics, four years of English, one or two years of laboratory science, and two or more years of history or government. In addition, college entrance examinations and other aptitude tests may be required. Good written and verbal communications skills are also important.

To Become a Pharmacist:

To become a pharmacist requires graduation from an accredited college of pharmacy, a certified period of supervised internship experience, and successful completion of a service of examinations administered by a state board of pharmacy. Most states require a minimum number of continuing education hours to maintain your license.

College requirements typically include two years of pre-pharmacy courses and four years of a professional program leading to a Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm.D.) degree. Pre-pharmacy courses include biology, chemistry, calculus, English, speech, and general education courses. Admission into the

professional phase of a pharmacy program is a competitive process which typically includes among the requirements an application form, personal interview, and letter of recommendation.

Professional curricula among accredited colleges of pharmacy are similar but not identical. Courses focus on the chemical principles of drugs and how they work; the preparation, distribution, and administration of drugs; management and pharmaceutical marketing; and drug therapy principles coupled with evaluation of appropriate drug therapy to provide optimal therapeutic outcomes for patients. Besides lecture and laboratory courses, the student also completes a series of clerkships to provide hands-on experiences in various pharmacy practice settings.

Because of the extensive education and training, a pharmacy graduate is able to pursue a diverse range of career opportunities, including community pharmacy, hospital pharmacy, clinical pharmacy, pharmaceutical sales, military pharmacy, clinical and laboratory research positions in federal, state, and local governments, professional association work, and many other specialized areas. Additional training or advance degrees are usually necessary to teach in a college of pharmacy or to conduct research.

The College of Pharmacy at South Dakota State University offers a Pharm.D. degree and can be contacted for more information at:

South Dakota State University
College of Pharmacy
Box 2202C
Brookings, SD 57007-0099
605-688-6197
www.sdstate.edu/academics/collegeofpharmacy/

To Further Explore Pharmacy:

1. Talk with a pharmacist in your community.
2. Write the sources listed below.
3. Write and/or visit an approved career school.

Sources For Further Information

American Pharmaceutical Association
2215 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20037
www.aphanet.org

South Dakota Pharmacists Association
PO Box 518
Pierre, SD 57501
605-224-2338
www.sdpha.org

South Dakota Society of Health System Pharmacists
PO Box 7100
University Station
Brookings, SD 57007
605-627-5363

www.sdshp.com

American Society of Health-System Pharmacists
7272 Wisconsin Avenue
Bethesda, MD 20814
www.asph.org