

Home Health Care

Holland Code: SCI

Background

Home health care is a practice that specializes in treating patients in their homes or other residential facilities, such as assisted living communities. Most of the prescription therapy is directed toward intravenous (IV) admixtures that are compounded by the home health care pharmacist at the direction of the physician. This type of practice also may focus on other complex therapy regimens. Because of the complexity of the medications and setups required, home health care pharmacies tend to concentrate on fewer patients than other types of pharmacies. It is typical for a home health care pharmacy to service as few as 50 to 80 patients at a time. Pharmacists working in a home health care role may partner with hospice organizations, visiting nurse teams, and social services team members.

According to the respondents in this survey, 21% of respondents' time is spent in patient care services. An additional 18% is spent dispensing medications (including the associated patient counseling). Medication management takes up an additional 15%, followed by medication preparation at 10% (including the preparation of complex parenteral prescription medications).

Characteristics

Thirty-two home health care pharmacists responded to the 2012 *APhA Career Pathway Evaluation Program* survey. Seventy percent held a PharmD degree. Twenty-four percent indicated an advanced degree (MA, MS, MBS, PhD, or other). Twenty-two percent completed a residency program, 43% completed certificate training, and 8% reported to have completed some form of other training. The respondents' average age was 47 years old. Over two-thirds of the respondents (70%) were female. Close to half of the respondents (48%) report that they are in management positions. Annual income data indicated 21% having an income of less than \$100,000.

Thirty-four percent earn between \$100,000 and \$120,000 and 44% earning over \$120,000.

The majority of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with their work, with 44% indicating they are "extremely satisfied" and 44% indicating "somewhat satisfied." Similarly, these pharmacists (38%) find their career "extremely challenging" and another 53% indicated "somewhat challenging."

Insider's Perspective

What aspects of the job are most appealing?

Many home health care pharmacists highly valued the time that they were able to spend with and the direct impact made on patients. One pharmacist said that they most enjoyed: “Helping patients at home by providing the medicine they need, so they can go home from hospitals early.” Another enjoyed that they were a valued part of the care team: “We are totally involved with our patients, caregivers and prescribers. Our input is considered very important and appreciated.” Other aspects of the job that were appealing to these pharmacists included the flexible work schedule and minimal weekend and holiday work.

What aspects of the job are least appealing?

Several respondents said that they didn’t particularly enjoy being on-call. Others disliked the paperwork that is required and shortages in staffing. A few respondents reflected on the burden of insurance issues: “sometimes involved in coordinating patient’s insurance problem that not related to pharmacist’s clinical work.”

What advice should students and practitioners consider when selecting the option of home health care pharmacy?

One respondent recommended that “Student pharmacists need to have good basic clinical skills, dosing monitoring skills, medication monitoring experience and telecommunication skills prior to considering home health care setting.” Another said that “you need to be able to work very independently, [have] VERY good time management skills, [and] need to love driving and working in your car.”

Adapted from the American Pharmacists Association