

## Long-Term Care Holland Code: SIC

### Background

As a general rule, a long-term care pharmacist is engaged by a long-term care pharmacy to provide pharmacy, infusion, education, consulting, and related services for a specific patient population. There are two general career paths in long-term care pharmacy: one focuses on dispensing/management operations and the other on consultant services. This profile addresses both roles.

With the “aging of America,” the proportion of people needing long-term care can be expected to increase. Long-term care pharmacists practice in a variety of settings, including hospitals that own skilled nursing facilities, long-term care pharmacies, nursing homes, and rehabilitation facilities, or they may practice as independent consultants. Pharmacists in this field work with medication dosage requirements, drug interactions, drug therapy regimens, and formulary decisions that differ from those used in other population segments. They may be restricted to a limited number of medications to treat patients because of the therapeutic effects of drugs in elderly patients. Although generally a geriatric population, some long-term care facility populations include the placement of non-geriatric residents such as those with HIV infection, multiple sclerosis, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or developmentally challenged residents.

### Characteristics

According to the survey results, 26% of work time is spent on medication management services. This is followed by 24% spent on medication dispensing (including associated patient counseling), 10% on data management, and 10% on patient management services.

Fifty long-term care pharmacists responded to the 2012 *APhA Career Pathway Evaluation Program* survey. Fifty-seven percent had a bachelor of pharmacy degree and 52% held a PharmD degree (this includes those with a Post BS PharmD degree. Eleven percent indicated they earned an advanced degree (MA, MS, MBA, PhD, or other). Notably, 42% had completed some certificate training, 21% had been through a residency program, and 12% completed some form of other training. Respondents' average age was 50 years old. Just over two thirds (65%) of respondents were female. Thirty-two percent indicated some type of management role. Income data show 36% earn between less than \$100,000, 60% earned more than \$100,000 or more per year, and 6% indicated that they earn more than \$170,000. The average time worked per week was 47 hours. Respondents represented 22 states.

Most respondents indicated that they were satisfied with their work with 38% indicating “extremely satisfied” and 73% indicating “somewhat satisfied.” On a similar scale,

respondents said they felt the work was challenging, with 46% indicating “extremely challenging” and 73% indicating “somewhat challenging.”

## **Insider’s Perspective**

### **What aspects of the job are most appealing?**

Many of the long-term care pharmacists who responded to this survey cited the flexibility of their schedule as one of the most appealing aspects of this work setting. Others liked things such as the “opportunities to use clinical training,” “working with a unique and extremely complex patient population,” “analysis of medication results in geriatric settings,” and “working for a privately held company.” One pharmacist said, “With the aging population, pharmacists are the ideal “patient advocate” regarding safe medication use, appropriate drug therapy, unnecessary medications, cost-saving factors, [and] more in long- term care settings. Collaborating with the health-care team is beneficial for all of our seniors overall well-being as they age.”

### **What aspects of the job are least appealing?**

Many respondents indicated that the “workload” and/or the “long hours” are the least appealing aspects of the work. Several others said that “paperwork” was one of the least appealing aspects.

Others discussed the burden of regulatory requirements, management challenges, and a lack of resources as difficulties for some in this position.

### **What advice should students and practitioners consider when selecting the option of long-term care pharmacy?**

One respondent gave the following, comprehensive advice about long-term care pharmacy: “Consulting at LTC facilities can require significant driving time and distances. You have to have a sound clinical backing, be able to do “on the spot” research in areas you may not be as familiar with, have a sense of humor, be able to communicate with other professionals and the public, and accept that there are limits to what you will be able to accomplish.” Another pharmacist simply said: “Develop a passion for serving, caring for, [and] advocating for the geriatric community and the rest will fall in place.”

Adapted from the American Pharmacists Association