

Mail Service Pharmacy

Holland Code: CSI

Background

Mail service pharmacy has changed over the past decade with more third-party insurance organizations, public and private employers and Internet pharmacy service expansion. Insurance coverage for many plans includes a mail service option, which may reduce the overall co-payment for the patient and can provide an extended supply of medication (up to 3 months).

While, historically, mail service pharmacy had been utilized purely for medication dispensing, today's mail service pharmacist can be involved in broader patient care. A respondent from Nevada indicated liking "being able to focus on patient care and satisfaction." Another from Texas provided insight into the newer roles that pharmacists now have in mail service, stating enjoyment in "being a counseling pharmacist in mail order, even though [you] don't see the patients you are speaking to, you are helping people and saving lives every single day."

Twenty-three percent of respondent's time is spent on medication dispensing, including associated patient counseling. In addition, time required for two categories were listed at 17% each: health professional consulting and patient care services (e.g., disease management, medication therapy management). This was followed by 11% of time for organization and business management, and 9% for personnel management. The other time is split across a number of different functions with 13% allocated to "other" activities.

Characteristics

Twenty five mail service pharmacists responded to the 2012 *APhA Career Pathway Evaluation Program* survey. Seventy-one percent of respondents held an entry-level pharmacy degree, with 16% having a PharmD degree. Seven percent indicated they earned an advanced degree (MA, MS, MBA, PhD, or other). Only 3% had completed some type of certificate training and 2% had been through a residency program. Respondents' average age was 43 years old. Just under two thirds (60%) of respondents were male. Twenty-nine percent indicated some type of management role. Income data show 36% earn between \$80,000–100,000, while 60% earn \$100,000 or more per year, and 2% indicated they earn more than \$170,000. The average time worked per week was 42 hours. Respondents represented eight states with the majority of respondents from Texas and Nevada.

Respondents indicated that they were satisfied with their work, with 35% indicating “extremely satisfied” and 50% indicating “somewhat satisfied.” On a similar scale, respondents said they felt the work was challenging, with 21% indicating “extremely challenging” and 60% indicating “somewhat challenging.” An Ohio respondent indicated that mail service pharmacy is a “constantly changing environment with challenging and rewarding opportunities.”

Insider’s Perspective

What aspects of the job are most appealing?

Twenty-nine percent of the respondents indicated that patient care was the most appealing aspect of their work. A Texas respondent found that “working in mail order [there was] more time to counsel patients than ever.” Twenty-four percent of the respondents indicated that the hours/schedule was a most appealing aspect of the position. A Texas respondent stated having “sufficient time to take care of each patient—great schedule.” An additional 7% indicated that the benefits were appealing as well.

What aspects of the job are least appealing?

In contrast to the most appealing aspects, 17% stated that they have to deal with nonpharmacy issues and insurance coverage, which is a least appealing aspect of the position. An additional two areas were both mentioned 8% of the time as being least appealing aspects: repetition and schedule. This is of interest because schedule also was listed by some respondents as an appealing aspect of the position. Perhaps this discrepancy depends somewhat on the specific mail service environment, which was highlighted by a Nevada respondent who summed up both of these issues when stating that the least appealing aspects were the “repetitive [nature of the work] and the frequent schedule changes.”

What advice should students consider when selecting the option of working in mail service pharmacy?

No one single theme emerged from respondents as they provided insight across a wide variety of areas. A Virginia mail service pharmacist stated that one must “be able to communicate well—[especially] with upset members on occasion.” A Nevada respondent thought it important to let others know that they need an “enhanced grasp of drug information.”

Adapted from the American Pharmacists Association