



Polish pharmacy job market in opinion of pharmacists

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ABSTRACT

For many years, the occupation of a pharmacist has been the profession, which ensured employment, and the period of seeking employment was not long. Those interested in this occupation may undertake education in the specialty of pharmacy at ten universities in Poland. Considering the wide scope of knowledge acquired by pharmacists during their studies, they are very well educated. Students at the faculties of pharmacy undertake an obligatory semi-annual apprenticeship in pharmacies, which after graduation results in obtaining the right to practice the occupation of a pharmacist, and is a passport to independent work in a pharmacy. Those interested in further education have many educational possibilities: post-graduate studies and continuous improvement courses, which increase the knowledge and improve of qualifications. The objective of the study was identification of pharmacists' opinions concerning the present pharmaceutical labour market in Poland. The research material was collected using an anonymous survey. The study was conducted during the period from September 2011 – January 2013, in a group of 504 respondents – Masters of Pharmacy employed in Polish community pharmacies. The analysis covered the period of seeking a job in this profession after graduation from university, number of changes of workplaces during occupational life as a pharmacist, and satisfaction with the occupation performed or lack thereof. The criteria of choosing this occupation and the attitude towards a pharmacy as a workplace were also investigated.

Keywords: pharmacist, pharmaceutical graduate education, trends of pharmacy

INTRODUCTION

For many years, young people have continued to choose the occupation of a pharmacist as a profession ensuring employment after graduation from university. Those interested may undertake studies in the specialty of pharmacy at ten universities in Poland, i.e. Białystok, Bydgoszcz, Gdańsk, Katowice, Krakow, Lublin, Łódź, Poznań, Warsaw, and Wrocław.

Considering the wide scope of knowledge acquired by pharmacists during their studies, they are very well educated. This is provided by the highly specialised studies for a Master Degree, which last for five and a half years and requiring from future graduates much systematic work and involvement. Anatomy, physiology, chemistry, pharmaceutical chemistry, mathematics, statistics, biophysics, synthesis of medicinal products, technology form of drugs, pharmacology with pharmacodynamics, pharmacokinetics, toxicology, technology of drug forms, are

not easy subjects [9]. Depending on the education centre, during the studies, students have an opportunity to choose a specialty, including pharmaceutical analytics, community pharmacy, hospital and clinical pharmacy, industrial pharmacy, herbal remedies, phytochemistry and phytotherapy, pharmacotherapy proceedings, pharmacoeconomics, biotechnology in health protection, ecotoxicology and health promotion, cosmetology, designing medicinal substances, or food and drug toxicology [6].

Within their studies, the students of pharmacy undertake an obligatory semi-annual apprenticeship in pharmacies, which after the graduation results in obtaining the right to practice the occupation of a pharmacist, and is a passport to independent occupational activity. For pharmacists, the educational possibilities are not ended with obtaining the diploma of a Master of Pharmacy and the license to practice pharmacy. All pharmacists, if they wish so, may supplement their knowledge during post-graduate studies. They are obliged to participate in continuous improvement courses, which provide the acquisition of new knowledge and updating of knowledge already possessed [8]. Courses and training cover a wide scope of problems

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in the area of pharmaceutical care, pharmacotherapy, technology of drug forms, herbal remedies, biotechnology in pharmaceutical sciences, pharmacovigilance and safety of using drugs and medicinal products, pharmacoeconomics and drug management in a hospital, as well as management of a pharmacy or pharmaceutical wholesaler. These courses also cover legal regulations with respect to turnover of medicinal products, and ethical regulations concerning the general conduct of a pharmacist, as well as the ethical-legal aspects of studies of new drugs in clinical trials on humans. For those interested, courses have been designed within the scope of problems pertaining to homeopathic and cosmetic products available in pharmacies. The scope of problems concerning health promotion in community pharmacies in Poland, with consideration of stimulants, addiction to alcohol and narcotics, constitute a separate section of the courses. [7]

The majority of graduates of pharmaceutical studies (approximately 90% according to the studies by Prof. J. Pawlaczyk [1]) work in community and hospital pharmacies, and in pharmaceutical wholesaling. However, this is not the only possibility of employment, because there are many places where a pharmacy graduate may find a job. Such places, e.g. are in the pharmaceutical industry and other business entities responsible for the production and introduction to the market, and authorized for import and export of pharmaceuticals and medicinal products. Masters of Pharmacy are prepared for participation in clinical research, monitored therapy of concentrations of drugs, and monitoring of undesirable effects of pharmaceuticals, while being employed in facilities, which carry out such studies. Pharmaceutical inspection, and other offices, national and selfgovernment institutions active in the domain of pharmacy and health protection are workplaces for pharmacists as well. Other workplaces may be industry and enterprises or laboratories in cosmetics and chemical sectors, scientific institutions and research-development centres, supervision measurement laboratories, and laboratories in the area of general hygiene, institutions engaged in food control, and research, laboratory diagnostics and environment protection, as well as facilities involved in advisory roles and dissemination of knowledge within the scope of pharmaceutical sciences [3].

MATERIALS AND DISCUSSION

The objective of the study was identification of opinions of pharmacists concerning the current pharmaceutical labour market in Poland. The research material was collected using an anonymous questionnaire from September 2011 – January 2013, which covered a group of 504 respondents – Masters of Pharmacy employed in community pharmacies in the regions of: Lublin, Kraków, Warsaw, Poznań, and Olsztyn.

RESULTS

According to the analysis of the material obtained in the presented study, the period of searching for employment after graduating from university and obtaining the right to practice was approximately one month, on average; however, a large group of graduates reported that they did not seek a place of employment. Such a situation, to a large extent, is due to the fact that during their studies pharmacy students are obliged to participate in summer apprenticeships and a six-month apprenticeship during the sixth year of studies.

The results of the survey showed that for the majority of pharmacists the current workplace is the 2nd, 3rd or even 4th place of work. This shows that the businessmen running pharmacies are good employers who take care of their employees, and therefore their staff neither considers nor frequently changes the place of employment.

Based on the results of the survey, among the total number of 504 pharmacists examined, when asked about years of performing the occupation, the following percentages of pharmacists replied as presented below:

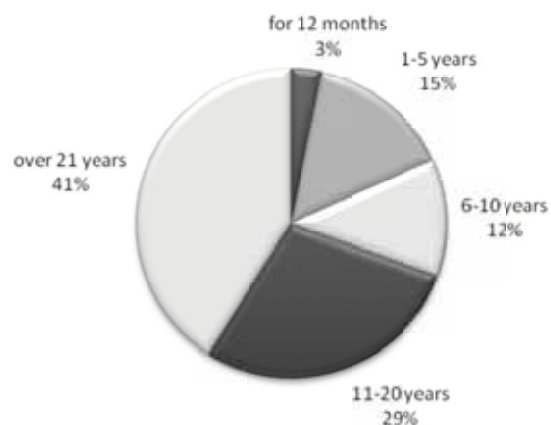


Fig. 1. Work experience in the occupation of a pharmacist

Analysis of the above-mentioned figure shows that a full-time job in a pharmacy provides stable employment, good work conditions and payment. A review of job offers found on general websites, advertisements in the press, and on websites of pharmaceutical chambers shows that there is a constant demand for Masters of Pharmacy. They do not have to re-qualify themselves for work in other occupations, as in fact, is the case for example, of Masters of History, Political Science, and Sociology, and increasingly more often specialists of marketing and trade. [4]

Based on the question: ‘Does this work bring you satisfaction – do you help others?’ it may be presumed that for the majority of respondents working in a pharmacy is satisfying (384 respondents - 76%) as concerns providing assistance to patients. As many as 200 respondents (40%) reported that they liked their occupation and the direct

contact with others. For 384 pharmacists (76%), working with patients, conversation, possibility to provide assistance and advice with the selection of a drug or cosmetic brought about job satisfaction, while 161 respondents (32%) experienced the feeling of providing assistance to patients.

Some of the pharmacists in the study (6 %), considered their occupation as peaceful from the aspect of the stability of employment. According to 57 respondents (11%), an employee who performs his/her job well does not have to worry about the termination of a contract of employment.

Pharmacists very frequently continue family traditions. Fifty per cent of the respondents selected their study speciality following suggestions by the family or acquaintances. While choosing the occupation of a pharmacist the candidates were guided by the possession by their parents or family members of a business in the form of a pharmacy; therefore, already during their studies they are guaranteed a workplace after graduation. There were also some respondents (33 respondents – 6%) who, for many reasons, chose the study specialty by coincidence; nevertheless, later, the education they had acquired decided about the occupation performed and the workplace.

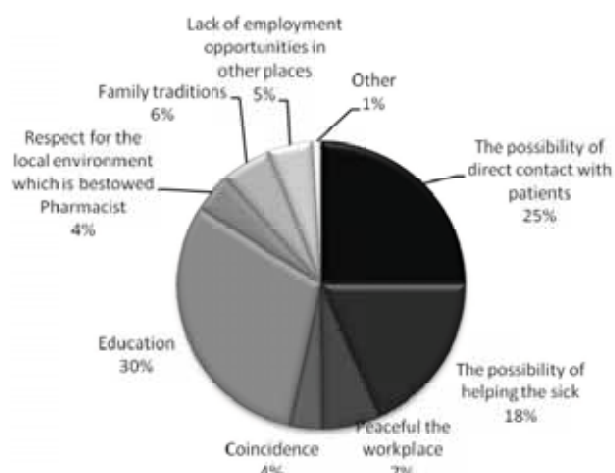


Fig. 2. Reason for selection of pharmacy as a workplace

The above-presented figure shows that the majority of Masters of Pharmacy in the study were satisfied with work in a pharmacy; nevertheless, many of the respondents (22%) considered a pharmacy as a place for purchasing drugs.

Students of pharmacy considered that drugs should be sold exclusively in a pharmacy, hence the appeal supported by the Deans of Departments of Pharmacy of 26 November 2012. This appeal also concerns the recognition of the occupation of a pharmacist as a medical occupation, the determination of auxiliary activities performed by pharmaceutical technicians, independent

drug dispensing, and provision of complete information about drugs only by those who possess university education in pharmacy [2]. It may be clearly observed that both the university authorities and the future pharmacists are concerned about the maintenance of patient safety and prestige of the occupation they will perform in the future. A large percentage of pharmacists who participated in the survey considered a pharmacy a place where patients obtain advice in the area of pharmaceutical care, whereas that they provide advice with respect to the use of drugs prescribed by a physician, and also advice in the area of self-care concerning over the counter (OTC) drugs, dietary supplements and dermatological cosmetics. Through the above-mentioned actions, important decisions are undertaken in a pharmacy concerning the health of patients, of which the pharmacists are aware.



Fig. 3. What is a pharmacy in opinions of pharmacists

Only 23 of the pharmacists in the study admitted that they were dissatisfied with their work in a pharmacy and the provision of services to patients, which constituted only 6% of the total number of respondents. There was also a group of respondents who considered that the work of a pharmacist is not appointment and assistance for others, but an occupation like any other job. Pharmacy is a common business, which, in the economic market, seeks only profit, and the actions undertaken lead to competition with other business entities. Obviously, the majority of the pharmaceutical environments do not agree with such an approach to pharmacy based on the principles of free market trade, and placing it as equal to other sectors, e.g. food or textiles [5]. In this way, primarily the so-called pharmacies systems are approached, which are mainly biased towards positive economic results. Some pharmacists, after obtaining occupational experience during work in a pharmacy, decide to become engaged in private business in the form of a pharmacy.

CONCLUSION

In summing up the presented study, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. A pharmacy is the primary place of employment of pharmacists; however, this education provides various occupational possibilities – work in laboratories, national administration and self-government institutions, pharmaceutical companies – warehouses, enterprises producing drugs and pharmaceuticals.
2. The period of seeking a job in the occupation of a pharmacist is relatively short, compared to other occupations functioning in the general labour market. Pharmacists do not seek employment or the search lasts up to 1 month. Such a situation gives hope to the students of faculty of pharmacy that they will not have problems in finding employment.
3. The occupation of a pharmacist is a stable job. In their occupational life, pharmacists change their workplace three times, on average. There is no problem with finding a job in this occupation, because there is still a demand for pharmacists and this situation has not changed for many years.
4. The majority of pharmacists in the survey were satisfied with their work, they considered it as satisfactory with respect to the provision of assistance for others in the field of health, and considered pharmaceutical care as an important part of health care.
5. Similar to any other occupational environments, among those employed in a pharmacy – which is the largest occupational group among pharmacists – there were few representatives of the group dissatisfied with their job. However, those dissatisfied constituted only 6%.

Summing up the analysis of the occupation of a pharmacist, the studies of pharmacy still provide a great

chance for finding a good, stable and satisfying job quickly. This is extremely important in the context of the lack of stabilization of employment among other occupations not related with health care.

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