

Pharmacy Technicians in Vermont

Summary of May 2005 Pharmacy Technician Survey

Prepared by:

University of Vermont College of Nursing and Health Sciences

Funded by: HRSA grant #1R1CRH03426-01-0

For more details: (802) 656-3822 • e-mail: shelly.naud@uvm.edu

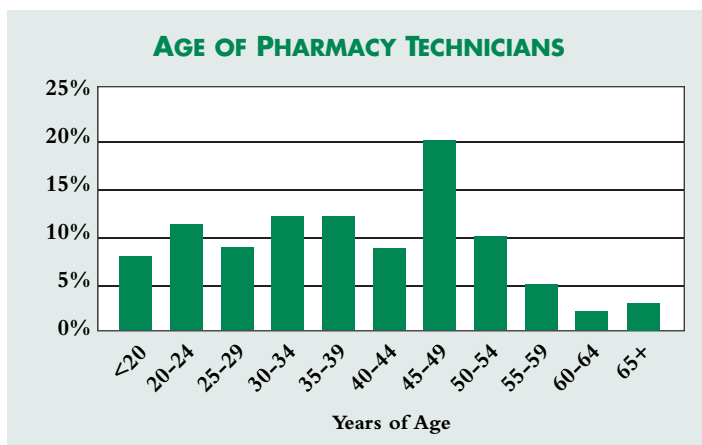
Background

One factor in assuring access to quality health care for all Vermonters is current knowledge of health workforce resources. For that reason, the University of Vermont College of Nursing and Health Sciences conducted the May 2005 Pharmacy Technician (Pharm Tech) survey. Of 803 Vermont registered Pharm Techs sent the survey, 205 completed it, for a 26% response rate.

Since 2000, studies have explored the dynamics of the Pharmacist workforce shortage, including the use of substitute labor, Pharmacy Technicians and Assistants/Aides.^{1,2} Driving the mounting demand for Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians alike are advances in drug therapies, rising volume of prescriptions, and population aging. Nationwide in 2004, the vacancy rate for Pharmacy Technicians was 3.7%.³ In Vermont in 2005, it was 2% at 12 of 16 hospitals reporting.⁴

Pharmacy Technician Demographics

- Age: mean 38.6 yrs (range 15-83 yrs).
- Gender: 89% Female.
- Race: 95% Caucasian.
- Income of fulltime Pharm Techs - Mean personal: \$ 30,789; Household: \$ 49,722.



Education

Degree on entry as Pharm Tech

- <High school: 9%
- High School: 64%
- Associates: 9%
- Bachelors: 11%
- Masters: 1%
- Other (i.e certificate) 5%

Continuing education (CE)

- 10% currently enrolled in a pharmacy technology-related education program leading to a degree or certificate.
- 41% participated in a pharmacy technology CE program in the past 12 months.

Certification

Certified (CPhT) by the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board

- Yes: 51%
- No: 25%
- Planning to be: 18%
- No Answer: 7%

Employment

Full time 64%, Part time 29%, Per diem 5%,

Work Setting

Worksite setting, current Pharm Tech position

- Retail pharmacy store 56%
- Community hospital 12%
- Retail store or supermarket pharmacy 12%
- Academic medical center hospital 11%
- Government agency <1%
- Mail order pharmacy company <1%
- Other (e.g Long term care) 6%

Career Advancement

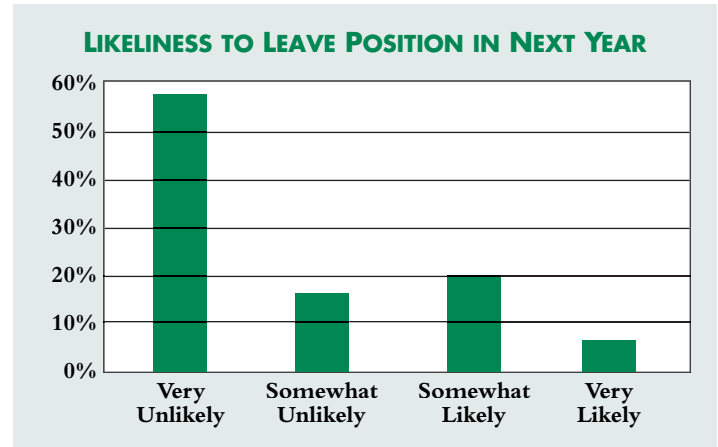
33% (n=67) considered attending pharmacy school:

Of these 67, some (n=25) took one or more of the following steps:

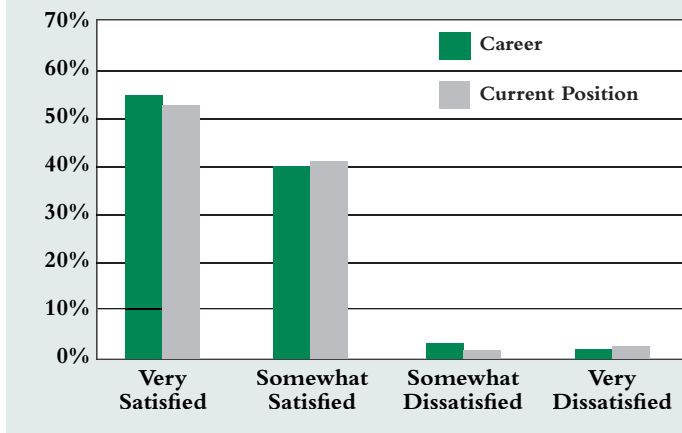
- explored programs (n=19),
- drafted or submitted applications (n=8),
- started or starting school (n=4).

The following obstacles to career advancement were noted:

Geographic (n=23), financial (n=8), other (n=5, including children, length of study, transfer of grades).



SATISFACTION WITH CAREER AND CURRENT POSITION



Would you advise high school or college student to pursue a pharmacy technician career?

Yes 78%, No 7%, Unsure 14%, No Answer 1%

Of those “Somewhat” or “Very Likely” to leave (n=53 of 205),

- Top reasons: Salary/Benefits 43%, Position Change 36%, Return to School 36%, Move/Relocation 32%, Job Stress 23%, Management Practices 19%.
- Would you leave the profession? Yes 51%, No 17%, Unsure 30% No Answer 2%.

Discussion

This study found that although Vermont pharmacy technicians report satisfaction at work (career 95%, current job 94%), 26% report being likely to leave his/her current job in the next year. The reasons given are related more to livelihood (salary/benefits, return to school, move/relocation) than to workplace negatives (job stress, management practices). The younger age of this workforce and desire to continue their education in the field of pharmacy is encouraging however, career advancement will remain challenging due to the lack of pharmacy programs in Vermont.

References

- (1) Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Bureau of Health Professions. “The Pharmacist Workforce: A Study of the Supply and Demand for Pharmacists” (December 2000).
- (2) Cooksey JA, Knapp KK, Walton SM, Cultice JM. Challenges to the pharmacist profession from escalating pharmaceutical demand. *Health Aff (Millwood)*. 2002 Sep-Oct; 21(5):182-8.
- (3) American Society of Health System Pharmacists, 2004 ASHP Pharmacy Staffing Survey: Results. Survey conducted by Doug Scheckelhoff and Colleen Bush.
- (4) Office of Nursing Workforce Research, Planning, and Development, University of Vermont. “Vermont Health Workforce Assessment Survey” (2005).