

Part 7. Actions and directions

Authors

Claire Anderson, Marion Schaefer, Rebecca Buckle Nordor, Janet Cooper, Craig Pederson, Pharmacy Workforce Working Group, Board of Pharmacy Practice, BPP working group; Tana Wuliji, FIP Project Manager, Human resources and education.

Summary

- Pharmacy workforce planning should aim towards self-sufficiency and be integrated into broader health workforce planning. They should be informed by reliable workforce data, evidence on factors and issues affecting the workforce and comprehensive workforce modelling.
- Actions to develop the pharmacy workforce should focus on developing partnerships, human resource information systems and strategic workforce plans.

Pharmacy workforce planning

There is an urgent need for broad, integrated, strategic international and local leadership and vision for addressing the complex issues surrounding pharmacy workforce planning and policy making. Pharmacy workforce planning and policy making must be integrated with that of other healthcare professionals and aim towards self-sufficiency rather than relying on foreign workers.

In order to model the demand for pharmacists it is very important to define needs based roles for all cadres in the pharmacy workforce in any particular country. Future policy and planning scenarios must also take into account opportunities for pharmacists to adopt new roles that are dependent on having sufficient pharmacists but also on the appropriate skill mix, including pharmacy technicians.

Pharmacy workforce planning must be long term, looking at least 10 to 20 years ahead and with due evaluation of risks to the pharmacy workforce. Modelling of long term future workforce scenarios must at the minimum consider information about workforce supply and attrition, such as census data, information about the number of newly licensed pharmacists (eg – local graduates, foreign pharmacists) as well as the number retiring or leaving the profession. Demand issues should be considered where possible, such as policy propositions, future trends, increasing use of technology,

changing patterns of health and disease, changing business models, current patterns of work and preferences including career aspirations and concerns, changing regulatory requirements and the changing economic climate. Modelling should also account for how these differ according to demographic factors.

To inform planning and develop better understanding of workforce levels, demographics, distribution and skill mix – information systems for monitoring the pharmacy workforce at a national level need to be developed. Data could be gathered at a global level to inform strategic dialogues and global policies relating to pharmaceutical systems and human resources for health.

To maintain and expand the future pharmacy workforce, increases in recruitment and retention will be essential as will decreases in attrition where possible, however scaling up the global pharmacy workforce is a complex, multi-factorial responsibility that requires coordinated action. It is important to realise that workforce problems are not specific to pharmacy and that we can look to other healthcare professionals' potential solutions while investigating our own. So far the most widely used methods to scale up the pharmacy workforce were increasing the numbers of pharmacy graduates and pharmacy technicians. To make the most effective use of these increases, changes in other areas need to be planned for such as the increases in pharmacy trained academic faculty required or increases to maintain an appropriate ratio of pharmacy technicians to pharmacists.

In countries seeking to expand enrolment into pharmacy education, maintaining the quality and prestige of the pharmacy profession by retaining high quality applicants is viewed with great importance and therefore measures should be undertaken to expand the applicant pool without compromising on the quality in order to select the best candidates. Need-based pharmacy education should be considered as it is important to ensure relevance and competence of the workforce to provide required pharmaceutical services. The unique perspectives of generations "X" and "Y" should also be factored into the design of the pharmacy curriculum.

In many countries, the lack of an appropriate academic workforce is a major bottleneck in workforce development. Strategies to encourage pharmacists to consider a career in academia should be based on a better understanding of

factors influencing poor retention and recruitment difficulties. In countries where practice is becoming increasingly patient focused, there will be a need for more practice supervisors, tutors and teachers. Career pathways for these teachers must be considered particularly in research lead universities where research based publications are important for university funding.

Retention policies to retain newly trained workforce is also a necessary strategy for workforce development. Regional and rural workforce distribution imbalances require greater investigation to better understand what recruitment and retention strategies encourage pharmacists to work and be retained in such areas.

Action is required at a number of different levels and stakeholders must collaborate with a range of partners including policy makers, pharmacy organisations, pharmacy employers, other health professionals and training institutions in order to model, plan and develop the workforce.

Key recommended actions

- Partnership
 - Professional bodies should work with governments, regulatory bodies, training institutions, unions, employers and other health professional organisations to develop long term projections and solutions for workforce issues in their country.
- Human resource information systems
 - Regularly and systematically collect and collate basic data on the pharmacy workforce (including non pharmacist cadres) according to a defined data set.
 - Data collected about registered pharmacists by regulatory bodies should have basic consistencies and be collated at a national level on a regular basis. Data should be reported to relevant stakeholders.
 - Pharmacists should provide accurate and up to date information to regulatory bodies and notify of any changes in status, for example – migrating abroad, career change, non-practicing.
- Strategic pharmacy workforce plans
 - Develop a strategic pharmacy workforce plan which is informed by evidence, reliable workforce data and comprehensive long-term modelling. Plans should address issues of workforce supply, recruitment, retention, distribution and attrition.

- Integrate the strategic pharmacy workforce plan into broader health workforce strategic plans or policies.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of workforce strategies.