

## PART 4: PHARMACY TECHNICIANS

Pharmacy technicians are defined as individuals working in a pharmacy, who under the supervision of a licensed pharmacist, assist in pharmacy activities not requiring the professional judgment of a pharmacist<sup>1</sup>. In a United States paper on pharmacy technicians in 2002, it is stated that although pharmacy technicians are employed in all pharmacy practice settings, their qualifications, knowledge and responsibilities are markedly diverse<sup>2</sup>. There are many issues regarding the development of the potential of pharmacy technicians in playing a role in health-care delivery. These issues may include the education and training of skilled dispensing support staff, accreditation of training institutes and certification.

There is a legal requirement for the certification of pharmacy technicians in 13 respondent countries and most of the countries do have some form of structured training and curricula in place. These learning programmes usually consist of a period of vocational training with some aspects of continuing education in a higher institution like a training college/hospital or university. Formal technician training programmes differ in many aspects, especially in duration.

In Europe, we observe that there are 11 countries (out of 16) that have formal education for pharmacy technicians. In the Western Pacific and Southeast Asia region, education is often informal and competency requirements are based on training. Training involves learning through specialised instruction, repetition and practice of a series of tasks until proficiency is achieved. Education, on the other hand, involves a deeper understanding of a subject, based on explanation and reasoning, through systematic instruction and training. A distinction between modes of training and learning needs to be made to best prepare for the future development of pharmacy technicians<sup>2</sup>.

Without a formal education and professional regulatory systems in place, it is challenging to define the size of the workforce.

FIP is proactive in recognising the need to understand the status and development of the pharmacy technician workforce today. A new survey has been initiated to investigate the

certification requirements and numbers of pharmacy technicians to further explore the issues highlighted in this report.

A summary of findings is provided in appendix 7.

### REFERENCES

1. Washington DC: Pharmacy Technician Certification Board 1995:15
2. White paper on pharmacy technicians 2002, American Journal of Health-System Pharmacists, Jan 2003; 60.