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How Do Doctor of Pharmacy Candidates Identify and Obtain Post-Graduate Positions?

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I. Introduction

In recent years, there has been some concern regarding the availability of post-graduate opportunities for Doctor of Pharmacy candidates.

As the pharmacy landscape continues to evolve it is important to know the factors that contribute to position obtainment upon graduation.

II. Objective

To assess post-graduate placement and factors that contributed to the identification and obtainment of these positions.

To determine actions completed during the position seeking process.

III. Methods

A survey was created in Qualtrics.

-Candidates were asked to provide their company of employment and position details (if applicable) such as title, practice setting and location.

-Candidates were asked to identify all applicable factors that contributed to their obtainment of the position (multiple choice questions with free text option).

-Candidates were asked to identify all activities in which they had participated as part of the position seeking process.

This survey was sent via email in April 2015 to all Doctor of Pharmacy candidates at a private, direct entry college of pharmacy during their final advanced pharmacy practice experience (APPE).

-Participation was voluntary.

-No incentive was offered.

-One follow-up email was sent.

-This survey received exemption from the University’s Institutional Review Board.

IV. Results

Response rate: 147/155 students (94.8%)

87.8% had obtained a position at the time of the survey

V. Discussion

-Candidates reported a range of post-graduate positions, practice settings, and geographic locations (22 different states) (Figure 1).

-38.8% of candidates accepted a residency position.

-58.9% of candidates obtained positions in community pharmacy (chain or independent); 35.7% obtained positions in hospital pharmacy.

-Top states where positions were obtained: OH (81); MI (7); AZ (4); NC (4)

-The importance of internships and APPEs may extend beyond the immediate experience and significantly influence employment opportunities for Doctor of Pharmacy candidates (Figure 2).

-32.6% of candidates obtained a position at a site/company where they had previously interned.

-22.5% of candidates obtained a position at a site/company where they had completed an APPE.

-Other factors identified included professional meetings, trade shows and residency showcases.

-The value of personal connections and networking must be recognized.

-28.7% of candidates indicated a personal connection or networking contributed to obtaining their position.

-The majority of candidates distributed their CV and completed one-on-one interviews while fewer candidates completed online interviews (Figure 3).

-Limitations of the survey include unknown generalizability to other schools, other states and other student populations.

-Future studies should include: comparing multi-year data, including other schools and gathering more specific information regarding activities completed during position seeking process.

-Courses focused on topics such as professionalism or career planning should highlight the potential impact of internships, IPPE and APPE placement, participation in career fairs, and personal connections/networking on a student’s career.