



**Survey of 2014-2015
pre-registration
trainee pharmacy
technicians**

Summary of findings
January 2017

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Background and summary

For the last three years we have been conducting surveys to better understand trainee and tutor perceptions of pharmacist and pharmacy technician pre-registration training. The surveys conducted were targeted at pre-registration trainee pharmacists, pre-registration pharmacist tutors and pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians (PTPTs). This survey was for PTPTs who trained in 2014-2015 and is the first ever national survey of such a group.

The survey was developed and run by the University of Bradford and Information by Design.

The survey was run online and recently registered pharmacy technicians were invited to respond via email. The overall response rate was 30 per cent.

PTPTs have a different relationship with us in comparison to pre-registration trainee pharmacists: we do not verify them before their training begins so have no means of contacting them until they register with us. For this reason we sent the survey to pharmacy technicians in England, Scotland and Wales who had completed their formal training and registered for the first time between November 2014 and October 2015.

We expect the results of this analysis to be of interest to PTPTs, pharmacy technicians and pharmacists, and their supervisors, pharmacy representative bodies, pharmacy educational providers, the departments of health, the NHSs and other employers.

The survey is accompanied by three infographics:

- a profile of the PTPTs who responded to the survey;
- a comparison of hospital and community PTPTs; and
- a comparison of PTPTs (2014-2015) and pre-registration trainee pharmacists (2013-2014).

Summary of findings

A total of 331 recently registered pharmacy technicians completed the survey and the overall findings were positive. Most (89 per cent) respondents were satisfied with the overall quality of the training they received. Only four per cent reported it as poor or very poor. Most (90 per cent) felt the training gave them the knowledge and skills they needed for their role and 84 per cent agreed that the training had prepared them to be a pharmacy technician.

Over half (59 per cent) of respondents worked in a community pharmacy and 35 per cent worked in the hospital sector. The remaining six per cent worked in the pharmaceutical industry, a GP practice or other workplace. The majority of respondents were female (84 per cent) and were from a white ethnic background (79 per cent). The next largest ethnic group was Asian or Asian British (13 per cent) followed by black or Black British (4 per cent) with the remainder from other ethnic groups or preferred not to say.

Unlike pre-registration trainee pharmacists, some PTPTs can access their qualification through an apprenticeship (<https://www.getingofar.gov.uk/>). In our survey, 23 per cent of respondents told us that they were on an apprenticeship scheme during their training.

Pharmacy technicians who undertook their training in the community sector were significantly more likely to have worked in a pharmacy for a number of years prior to starting their formal training in comparison to those who trained in a hospital. While the majority of technicians had taken up to two years to complete their knowledge and competence qualifications (57 per cent), respondents who trained in a hospital were twice as likely to have completed their training within this time (86 per cent of hospital trainees compared to 41 per cent of community trainees).

The type of education and training provider used to deliver the knowledge and competence qualifications differed according to where a pharmacy technician undertook their pre-registration training. Respondents who trained in a community pharmacy were more likely to have undertaken both their knowledge and competence qualifications with a distance learning provider (56 per cent of all respondents). Respondents who trained in a hospital were more likely to take their knowledge qualification through a further education (FE) college and their competence qualification via an NHS hospital/National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) provider (29 per cent of all respondents).

Two fifths (40 per cent) of respondents reported unplanned changes during their training. Of these, 18 per cent had a permanent change in their workplace supervisor and 16 per cent had a permanent change in their S (Scottish)/NVQ assessor.

In relation to support for studies, respondents who trained in a hospital were more likely to report having more than two hours protected study time per week (39 per cent for those who trained in a hospital in comparison to 13 per cent who trained in a community pharmacy), whereas those who worked in large organisation community pharmacies were more likely to report that they had no protected study time (28 per cent for those who trained in a community pharmacy in comparison to 21 per cent who trained in a hospital). Interestingly, there were no significant differences by sector in the amount of personal time that respondents used to study during their training. Overall, nearly one third (31 per cent) said they used more than 10 hours per week and a similar number said they used between 6 and 9 hours.

Almost one fifth (19 per cent) of respondents agreed that they felt isolated as a trainee in their workplace and this was significantly more likely for trainees working in the community pharmacy sector in comparison to those who trained in a hospital pharmacy.

Points for consideration

As this is the first time we have run this survey, we are unable to undertake a year on year comparison as we have been able to with the pre-registration pharmacist tutor and trainee surveys. We have, however, identified four issues:

1. Completion times;
2. Length of time working in a pharmacy before training;
3. Satisfaction levels; and
4. Unplanned changes.

Completion times

In understanding the trainee population, we know there are differences between the two sectors. The survey indicates that those who trained in a community pharmacy are more likely to take longer to complete their qualifications than those who trained in a hospital pharmacy. The survey highlighted that

there may be a number of reasons why this could occur. One of the issues that the survey identified is that PTPTs in the community pharmacy sector are expected to use more of their own time to study which may result in longer completion times.

Length of time working in a pharmacy before training

The survey identified that community PTPTs are more likely to have been working in a pharmacy setting for a longer amount of time than hospital PTPTs. This suggests that PTPTs in the community pharmacy sector may have already been working in a support staff role prior to undertaking their training, whereas this may not have been the case for those training in a hospital.

Satisfaction levels

Likewise, the survey found that there are differences between the hospital and community sectors in respect to training infrastructure and organisational culture of the training environment. Although these differences were picked up throughout the survey, there was no real variation in overall levels of satisfaction between the two sectors with the only real difference being that those who trained in a hospital setting were less likely to rate the overall quality of their knowledge qualification as good or very good.

Overall, recently registered pharmacy technicians were extremely positive about their pre-registration training experience with 89 per cent rating the overall quality of their training as good or very good. There were only a small number of differences by country that were identified throughout the whole survey.

Unplanned changes

A large number of respondents (40 per cent) reported that one or more unplanned changes occurred during their pre-registration training. As a result, these respondents were less likely than those who had not experienced unplanned changes to rate their overall training experience, the quality of their educational supervision, the quality of support and the quality of their knowledge qualification as good or very good.

Comparing pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians and pre-registration trainee pharmacists

Now that we have surveyed pre-registration trainee pharmacists (2012-2013 and 2013-2014) and PTPTs (2014-2015) we are in a position to compare views of their initial education and training.

We have compared the responses from pre-registration trainee pharmacist (2013-2014) and PTPTs (2014-2015). The comparison shows:

1. PTPTs are more satisfied with the quality of their training than pre-registration trainee pharmacists (89 per cent very good/good compared to 78 per cent);
2. More PTPTs than pre-registration trainee pharmacists would recommend their training to others (80 per cent compared to 70 per cent);
3. More PTPTs rate their training as very good/good than pre-registration trainee pharmacists (86 per cent compared to 66 per cent); and
4. PTPT rate the quality of their education supervision more highly than pre-registration trainee pharmacists (83 per cent compared to 60 per cent).

Our survey work

What we have done so far

Over the last three years we have surveyed the following three groups:

- Pre-registration trainee pharmacists (twice);
- Pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians (once); and
- Pre-registration pharmacist tutors (twice).

In addition to this we have commissioned two analyses of the pre-registration trainee pharmacists who identified themselves as being 'dissatisfied' with aspects of their pre-registration training.

The data we have gathered has contributed to us developing a far richer picture of pre-registration training and it will feed in to our development of revised initial education and training standards for both pharmacists and pharmacy technicians in 2016-2017.

We will issue a summary analysis of all the survey and analysis findings in 2017.

This initial cycle of survey work has now come to an end and we will pause for a while before considering how best to undertake survey work in the future.

Next steps

The data we have gathered from our surveys and analyses has enabled us to begin to develop a far richer picture of pre-registration training for both registrant groups but we know that there is further work to be done. Our analysis of this research will feed into our policy development and further engagement with our stakeholders about pre-registration training and initial education and training standards.

Revising our initial education standards, including those for pre-registration training, is a key priority for us and is one means by which we can ensure that members of the pharmacy team are equipped to work flexibly alongside other health and care professionals to respond with confidence to the changing needs of people and populations needing care. By doing this, the best use is made of the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of every member of the team to deliver pharmacy services and improve them. Further work will be undertaken in these areas in 2017-2018.