

Professional Pharmacy Organizations: State and National Levels

IMAGINE you want to be a pharmacist, but you have no real experience to list on your résumé, and you do not know anyone who currently is working as a pharmacist. One way to learn more about the profession and to make connections with other people in the field is to join an organization for pharmacists. In this unit, you will learn about professional organizations for people in pharmacy careers. A variety of groups provide numerous benefits to members.



Objective:



Describe professional pharmacy organizations.

Key Terms:



continuing education
networking
pharmacist
pharmacy technician
professional organization

Understanding Professional Pharmacy Organizations

Any club would have members who share common interests or goals. You may belong to a youth group at church, where the members share a common religion, or you may belong to a pep club, where the members all cheer for the same sports team. People in pharmacy careers have their own clubs, but professional organizations are more than just social clubs. The members work for the common purpose of advancing their profession.

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION BENEFITS

A **professional organization** is a group formed to provide career and personal development opportunities for people in a particular profession. The groups provide many benefits for members.

Networking

Professional organizations provide many opportunities for networking. **Networking** is developing connections with people who may be helpful in career advancement. The organizations ensure that the other members have similar professional interests.

Membership

Membership usually is limited to people working in one of several areas of the pharmaceutical field, such as pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, pharmacy students, and educators.

- ♦ A **pharmacist** is a professional who prepares and dispenses prescription drugs, according to a doctor's orders. To be a pharmacist, a person needs a Doctor of Pharmacy degree and must pass certain examinations before obtaining a license.



FURTHER EXPLORATION...

ONLINE CONNECTION: Professional Fraternities

In addition to the professional organizations mentioned in this unit, there are several professional fraternities for pharmacy students and alumni. Professional fraternities are not the social clubs you may think of when you hear the terms “fraternity” and “sorority.” Instead, these are groups of students who are pursuing careers in pharmacy. Many of the fraternities are co-ed, so men and women may become members. Some individual chapters, however, may be all men or all women.

Choose a college of pharmacy. Conduct some research on the Internet to determine whether the school has a professional fraternity for pharmacy students on campus. Find out what is required for membership for a specific chapter. For example, are freshmen allowed to join, or is the group exclusively for upperclassmen? Create a poster that lists the information you have learned. Include details of at least two upcoming events for fraternity members. Add information about alumni members, too.

The following websites may help you begin your research:

<http://www.kappapsi.org/national/index.php>

<http://www.alphazetaomega.net/>

<http://www.phideltachi.org/>

<http://www.lks.org/>

- ♦ A **pharmacy technician** is person who prepares and dispenses prescription drugs under the supervision of a pharmacist. A technician needs certification from a technical school or a community college, but a bachelor's degree usually is not required.

In addition to networking opportunities, professional organizations provide information on career opportunities and link companies who are hiring with people seeking jobs in the field.

Education

Professional organizations provide educational opportunities for their members. Most groups publish some sort of journal or newsletter to provide members with the latest information related to their career. In addition, some groups send emails and tweets to distribute new information to the members almost immediately.

Organizations also provide opportunities for **continuing education**, which is training for people who already hold a college degree but need annual and/or current credits to maintain a professional license. Examples of continuing education opportunities are workshops, conferences, classes, webinars, home-study programs, and online courses. Requirements for continuing education vary by state. Illinois requires pharmacists to obtain 30 hours of continuing education every two years from providers approved by the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE).

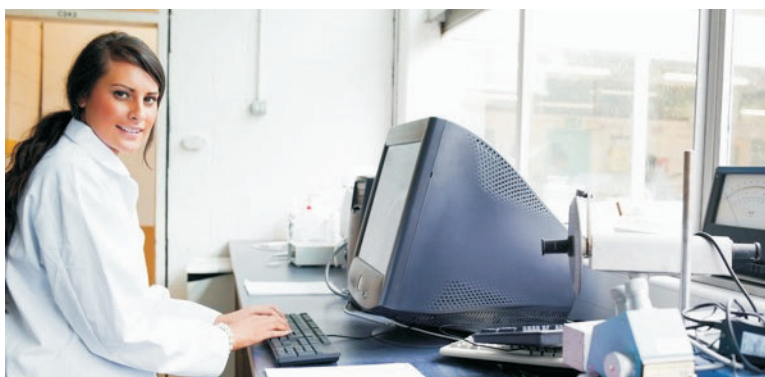


FIGURE 1. Professional pharmacy organizations may provide online courses for continuing education credits.

Representation

Professional groups work to educate and influence legislators who make policies regarding pharmaceutical practices. They may even support political action committees. In addition, they may educate the public about the importance of pharmacists and about specific pharmaceutical practices.

ORGANIZATIONS

State Pharmacist Organizations

Some pharmacist organizations are open only to individuals working in the state of Illinois, such as the Illinois Pharmacist Association (IPhA), which was founded in 1880. It is the state's largest and oldest professional pharmacy organization. It is open to pharmacists, technicians, and student pharmacists, as well as retired pharmacists.

Another state organization, The Illinois Council of Health-System Pharmacists, was formed in 1963. Its membership includes pharmacists, technicians, students, and pharmaceutical representatives.

National Pharmacist Organizations

- ◆ The American Pharmacists Association (APhA) was originally founded in 1852 as the American Pharmaceutical Association. It is the largest association of pharmacists, with approximately 60,000 members. Membership includes pharmacists, pharmaceutical scientists, student pharmacists, and pharmacy technicians.
- ◆ The American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) was established in 1942. It began as a subsection of APhA. Membership includes approximately 35,000 hospital and health-system pharmacists and technicians. The group does accept international members.
- ◆ The American Association of Pharmacy Technicians (AAPT) was founded in 1979. This group is exclusive to pharmacy technicians and technician students. It represents technicians working in hospitals, extended care facilities, community pharmacies, and as educators.
- ◆ The National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA) was founded in 1898. The group represents America's community pharmacies, which are retail shops where pharmacists fill prescriptions. Members include owners of 23,000 pharmacies. Pharmacy owners and managers are voting members. Staff pharmacists, retired pharmacists, students, and technicians are eligible to join, but they may not vote.
- ◆ The American Society of Consultant Pharmacists (ASCP) is an organization for pharmacists who specialize in senior care. The group includes about 7,000 pharmacist members, and 4,500 student members. Consultant pharmacists manage drug therapy for seniors, usually in hospitals or nursing homes. Their goal is to improve the quality of life for seniors through the use of appropriate, effective medication.

Summary:



A professional organization is a group formed to provide career and personal development opportunities for people in a particular profession. Professional organizations provide many opportunities for networking. Some groups are open only to pharmacists and student pharmacists, while some groups include technicians or even pharmaceutical sales representatives. The groups provide members with the latest information, as well as opportunities for continuing education. Professional groups also provide representation, work to educate and influence legislators, and educate the general public.

Checking Your Knowledge:



1. What is a professional organization?
2. What are the benefits of professional organizations?
3. What are the differences between a pharmacist and a technician?
4. What are the continuing education requirements for pharmacists in your state?
5. What are some examples of national pharmacist organizations?

Expanding Your Knowledge:



Interview a local pharmacist to ask if he or she is a member of any professional organizations. Find out which organizations the pharmacist joined and why he or she chose those particular groups. What benefits has the pharmacist found through membership in the organizations?

Web Links:



National Pharmacy Organizations

http://www.pharmacist.com/AM/Template.cfm?Section=News_Releases2&Template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=24372

Professional Associations

<http://abcnews.go.com/OnCampus/story?id=7518663&page=1#.TxMGBrJZr6M>

Associations for Pharmacists

<http://blog.soliant.com/pharmacy/4-organizations-for-pharmacists/>