

Pharmacy Faculty: The next generation

Zubin Austin BScPhm PhD

Associate Professor and Ontario College
of Pharmacists' Research Professor

What a great time to be a social pharmacy researcher!

- Unprecedented opportunities for collaboration within the health services research community
- Strong desire for pharmacy presence within inter- and multi-disciplinary research teams
- Need for pharmacy expertise to complement methodological skills
- The profession itself is more prominent in both the government and public sphere than ever before
- Tremendous success of social-admin faculty members across Canada in securing funding and in publication

What is “social pharmacy”

- A broad term that encompasses a variety of disciplines, methods, theories and approaches
- Sometimes may include “clinical” research, but more frequently involves application of social sciences to issues involving the profession of pharmacy

The opportunities for clinical-social-administrative pharmacy faculty

- Pressing issues related to professional practice, health policy, system design/structure, and funding
- Recognition of the importance of the pharmacist has lead to enhanced opportunities for CSAP faculty within prominent research programs...and have in turn driven greater recognition of the importance of the pharmacist

But where are the pharmacists?

- Relative dearth of pharmacists/pharmacy graduates within social-admin pharmacy departments across Canada
- Significant implications for the profession: the “insider” knowledge/experience/skills of pharmacists is crucial to framing research questions, understanding field results, and interpreting/analyzing data

Challenges to Recruitment of Graduate Students Who Are Pharmacists:

- Lack of awareness of social-administrative research as an option
- Lack of understanding of impact of this work in a variety of domains
- Impressive opportunities for practice
- Perceptions of social science
- ----but does this really matter if we are getting great non-pharmacy graduate students?

What role should social science play within the pharmacy research community?

- Psychology, sociology, economics, management, education, political science etc are foundational disciplines that can be applied to the understanding of pharmacy, other professions, and health care systems
- IMHO, health care is fundamentally an interpersonal activity; social sciences are crucial

What role should social science play within a pharmacy curriculum?

- A generation of “social-admin” courses within our curricula have not produced sufficient interest in social science amongst students
- Inadequate/insufficient social-science background makes it difficult for students to “catch up” in graduate school
- Yet...the ‘soft skills’ of students have never been of greater importance/interest, and they have never been (collectively) so inclined towards social sciences

Problematizing the situation:

- “Pharmacy practice research” has been instrumental in moving the profession forward
- This advance has historically been built upon a foundation of insider awareness coupled with knowledge/skills of a social science discipline
- How can we encourage more of our graduates/practitioners to consider advanced training in social sciences disciplines?
- What are the implications of having increasing numbers of non-pharmacist CSA researchers? Is there a “balance” issue?

What is being tried...

- Heightened prominence of social sciences as rigorous but interesting disciplines within the pharmacy curriculum itself
- Undergraduate opportunities to “try” and “play with” social science
- Specific programs/awards/incentives
- Marketing/advertising and increasing prominence of CSAP researchers
- Integration of “wet” and “dry” sciences/research programs

Some concluding thoughts...

- Social sciences are integral to the understanding of human interactions and thus are essential for pharmacists and pharmacy research
- Funding and dissemination opportunities have never been stronger for CSAP...how do we leverage this and incentivize our next generation to boldly go where so few others have gone before?