Pharmacy Faculty Perceptions of the Pharmaceutical Industry
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Introduction
There have been anecdotal reports of faculty members referring to working for a pharmaceutical company as “going to the dark side”. Because faculty members have a great impact on students this type of attitude may discourage students from pursuing this career path. It is unclear whether these perceptions are widespread, the opinion of a handful of people, an old school of thought, or a misconception.

Objectives
- To identify how pharmacy school faculty members perceive the pharmaceutical industry
- To determine if faculty members are aware of career opportunities available to pharmacists within the pharmaceutical industry

Methods
- 1045 faculty members received an email with a link to a 10 question online survey. Two questions were open ended.
- Email addresses were obtained from the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP) Pharmacy Practice Membership Directory.
- A directory of schools was obtained from the AACP website.

Results

- **Response Rate:** 38% (402/1045)
- 88 of 90 pharmacy schools in the United States were represented
  - The most common area that respondents had previous experience in was the clinical setting (79.1%) followed by community (61.3%) and hospital staff (51.1%).
  - 81.1% of respondents worked in 2 or more other areas of pharmacy
  - 91.5% of respondents held a PharmD degree
  - 2% of respondents had a BS only without any additional formal training (PharmD, residency, Masters, PhD)

**Figure 1. General Opinions About the Pharmaceutical Industry**

![Figure 1: General Opinions About the Pharmaceutical Industry](https://example.com/figure1.png)

**Figure 2. My attitude towards the pharmaceutical industry can be described as:**

![Figure 2: My attitude towards the pharmaceutical industry can be described as](https://example.com/figure2.png)

**Figure 3. Does your school offer a rotation in an industry setting?**

![Figure 3: Does your school offer a rotation in an industry setting?](https://example.com/figure3.png)

**Figure 4. Do you have any pharmacists from industry speak to students about career opportunities?**

![Figure 4: Do you have any pharmacists from industry speak to students about career opportunities?](https://example.com/figure4.png)

**Open Ended Comments**

Two open ended questions were available for respondents to make general comments. One question asked for thoughts on the pharmaceutical industry as a career option for pharmacists; the other question was left for responders to make any other general comments. Many mentioned that pharmacists in the industry were well compensated financially, but there were some concerns about job stability as well as narrow focus in terms of therapeutic knowledge. Respondents also felt that the industry may not be an ideal choice to begin one’s career; they felt that new graduates should gain more clinical experience before transitioning into the industry. There were also some comments referring to employment in the industry as “going to the dark side”.

**Discussion**
One of the limitations of this survey was that it only assessed each respondent’s knowledge of specific educational opportunities offered to students. These results cannot be used to determine whether industry speakers are invited to campuses to discuss career opportunities or if industry rotation opportunities truly exist. In order to determine these issues, the curriculum must be verified at each school.

While academic pharmacists may be aware of the existence of opportunities in industry, the extent of their knowledge is unclear. The respondents may not know what is involved in a specific position and how a pharmacist’s education and background can be beneficial. Additionally, different companies use different nomenclature for departments names, which may have caused some confusion for respondents.

While the attitudes generally do not seem to be negative, the industry should seek to improve relations with pharmacy school faculty members. While offering rotations at onsite facilities may not be feasible for all schools, there are certainly field representatives such as medical liaisons who could serve as preceptors to expose more students to career opportunities.

**Conclusion**

- **When asked if the pharmaceutical industry has good intentions for improving healthcare (Figure 1, Statement 1) and if the pharmaceutical industry is primarily concerned with sales (Figure 1, Statement 2), all regions had a majority of respondents that agreed or strongly agreed with both statements.**
  - **When asked whether an industry rotation was available to students and if any pharmacists from industry speak to students about career opportunities (the question in Figure 3), all regions except West South Central had a majority response of “Yes” to both questions.**

- **There were very few pharmacy practice faculty members with negative attitudes toward the pharmaceutical industry.**
- A majority of respondents agreed that the industry has good intentions to improve healthcare.
- All faculty members were able to identify at least one area in the pharmaceutical industry that is available for pharmacists as a career path.