Careers in Pharmacy

Click [here](#) to view many career option profiles!

Please note that this list includes many, but not all possible careers! There are many things you can specialize in.

**Academia**
- Wears multiple hats
  - Split between both teaching and practice
  - Should gain clinical practice before pursuing academia
- Training future pharmacists and conducting research
- Research may include laboratory studies to evaluate findings with other scientific data; research also is done on patient compliance, wellness and other disease-related measurements
- In addition to sharing pharmaceutical knowledge and information with other health care professionals and students, academic pharmacists also speak at industry events, contribute to science and education publications, and advise student pharmacists
- Key benefits: flexible schedule, interaction with students, good opportunity for advancement, help educate the pharmacist workforce
- Advice from the Field
  - Consider obtaining advanced degrees, certification, and residencies
  - Occasional stress, as the workload varies throughout the year
  - Balance heavy administrative loads and keep strict deadlines

**Ambulatory Care**
- Provision of integrated, accessible healthcare services by pharmacists who are accountable for addressing medication needs, developing sustained partnerships with patients, and practicing in the context of family and community
- Patients transitioning from the hospital to home or another care facility
- Acts as a patient advocate, the medication therapy management, promotes wellness, helps educate, helps patients self-manage their chronic disease
- Direct patient care and medication management for ambulatory patients, long-term relationships, coordination of care, patient advocacy, wellness and health promotion, triage and referral, and patient education and self-management
- May work in both an institutional and community-based clinic involved in direct care of a diverse patient population

**Chemotherapy**
- Prepares and dispenses chemotherapy drugs used in cancer treatments
- Assess the quality of the drugs and makes available to cancer hospitals and cancer treatment centers
- Know the effectiveness of the drugs

**Clinical Pharmacist**
- Works in cooperation with physicians and other clinical health providers to review and dispense medications to patients
- Evaluate a patient’s drug regimen and may recommend an alternative pharmacotherapeutic plan if the prescribed medications produce allergic reactions
- Educate patients on proper medication usage and monitor them for health problems

**Community Chain**
- Work with customers to fill their prescriptions, explain proper medication use, and provide clinical services
- Are often asked to give advice on diet, exercise, wellness or stress management
- Advise doctors about medication therapy, and help to identify possible drug interactions for people taking more than one medication
- Key benefits: Patient interaction; flexible hours, and have the most direct interaction with customers, along with community health center (CHC) pharmacists and independent owners
- Advice from the Field
  - Must have good people and communication skills.
  - Must be comfortable having a high level of interaction with the general public.
  - Must be able to manage significant paperwork and logistical details related to health insurance issues to make sure patients get the right care at the right price.

**Community Health Center**
- Play an important role in providing health care services and information to underserved populations
- Work closely with low-income patients to address their medication needs and questions. CHC pharmacists also conduct wellness and preventive health educational programs
- Key benefits: Patient interaction, opportunity to counsel patients, help patients get the care they need but sometimes can’t afford, CHC pharmacists work closely with patients who may have income, educational or other challenges. This is a great area of pharmacy service for those who want to have a direct and positive impact on those in need
- Advice from the Field
- Visit a variety of CHCs to decide what setting is most appealing to you (for example, in a rural area or in a city)
- Strong communication skills and be willing to contribute to patients’ knowledge about health
- Speaking more than one language is a great plus

**Compounding**
- Does essentially all of the same things as a regular pharmacist but with an emphasis on preparing customized medication to meet a patient’s needs or a doctor’s request
- Key benefits: Interaction with patients, opportunities to work with doctors and veterinarians
- Advice from the Field
  - Be willing to work in a team with other health care professionals.
  - Be comfortable doing complex calculations and working directly with liquids, tablets, and pills

**Corporate Management**
- Management positions for pharmacists who work in a corporate environment
- Chain community pharmacy organizations, health systems, wholesale organizations, pharmacy benefits management, and the pharmaceutical industry
- Responsibilities vary greatly depending on the type of corporation and the level of management status achieved
- Positions are found in functional areas, such as store or site operations supervision, regulatory affairs, clinical support, human resources, information technology, merchandising, and marketing

**Director of Pharmacy**
- Oversees a pharmacy’s operations and management
- Procure and store medications and work in coordination with medical staff to dispense it safely to patients
- Along with maintaining accurate records of accounting transactions, they respond to pharmacy claims adjudication
- Make the decisions to introduce improved operational programs and safety policies or update existing ones
- Implement strategic plans, evaluate service standards and boost performance for optimum efficiency

**Government/Federal**
- Employed by local, state, or federal government agencies: municipal health clinics, state Medicaid agencies, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), branches of the U.S. Military, and the U.S. Public Health Service (PHS)
- Responsible for dispensing drugs, managing pharmacy departments within a government branch, and reviewing new drug applications
- Regular pharmacists can serve in the military reserve and make a difference in the lives of active military members and their families
- Key benefits: wide variety of activities, flexible schedule, opportunities for growth, good salary, able to work in their community and serve when needed
- Advice from the Field
  - Look at long-term financial packages when considering a government/federal pharmacy job. For example, pharmacists in the military reserve can receive free continuing education and training courses

Health System
- Patients typically have more complicated conditions than those in an ambulatory setting and take multiple medications
- Exposure to oncology, intravenous (IV) medication therapy, neonatal care, nutrition, pain therapy, geriatrics, and much more
- Dispensing medication, making purchasing decisions, monitoring drug therapy, preparing IV medication, and overseeing drug administration
- Setting can vary greatly among health systems: some are centralized, with all of the pharmacy staff and equipment located in a single area of the hospital, usually on one of the lower floors. Another format is the decentralized pharmacy, where there is a main pharmacy in a central location but there are also “mini-pharmacies,” called satellites, located throughout the health system at key patient care units. The type depends on the size, needs, resources, and focus of the health system
- Interact with nurses and physicians in their positions.
- Often, do not work directly with the patient, but rather with the other health care providers to optimize the patient’s therapy

Home Health Care
- Specialize in treating patients in their homes or other residential facilities, such as assisted living communities
- May partner with hospice organizations, visiting nurse teams, or social services team members
- Because preparing medication and delivering care in someone’s home takes time, home health care pharmacists usually concentrate on fewer patients than those working in other settings
- Key benefits: flexible schedule, direct clinical involvement with patients, families, caregivers, and other health care workers
- Advice from the Field
  - Be open to an “on call” work load, as pharmacists in home health care could be called upon at any time to make in-house visits
Hospital
- Doctors, nurses and patients rely on hospital pharmacists for important drug information
- Work directly with doctors and nurses to make sure that each patient receives the correct medication, in the right dosage, at the right time
- Keep up-to-date records on each patient, which are used to fill medication orders and screen for drug allergies
- May work directly with patients to be sure they understand their medications while in the hospital and when they are discharged to go home
- Key benefits: interaction with other pharmacists and health care professionals, fast-paced work environment with multiple responsibilities
- Advice from the Field
  - Need to stay informed about new medications and therapies so that you can provide the best care to patients
  - Strong attention to detail skills
  - Be prepared for long hours and unpredictable schedules

Independent Community
- Ideal situation for a pharmacist who enjoys working in the community but wants to be his or her own boss
- An independent community pharmacy could be a single store with one owner or several stores owned by an individual or small group
- Have the opportunity to practice pharmacy according to their personal style, use their business and management skills, and customize their store to the needs of their patients and community
- Key benefits: patient interaction, community engagement, flexibility to make changes to meet patients’ needs, the most direct interaction with customers and their community at large
- Advice from the Field
  - Good people and communication skills
  - Comfortable with a high level of patient interaction
  - Good business management skills
  - Manage significant paperwork and logistical details related to insurance, inventory, payroll and other business issues

Industry
- Discovers, develops, produces, and markets drugs or pharmaceutical drugs for use as medications to be administered (or self-administered) to patients, with the aim to cure them, vaccinate them, or alleviate the symptoms
- Subject to a variety of laws and regulations that govern the patenting, testing, safety, efficacy and marketing of drugs
**Long Term Care**
- Oversees the pharmaceutical services for patients in a long term care facility
- Work in collaboration with the physicians, nurses and medical staff at the facility to evaluate patient health, dispense necessary medications and resolve any pharmacy-related concerns
- Update patient medication information in a medical database and monitor and record the results of the patient medication regimen
- Prepare reports of drug utilization and make recommendations to improve patient clinical care
- Provide medicine and drug treatments for long-term care facilities, such as nursing homes, assisted living facilities, group homes, and rehabilitation facilities
- Educate patients and their family, friends or other caregivers about different types of medication and treatments.
- Often working with the elderly, they also serve patients with HIV, multiple sclerosis (a chronic, often disabling disease that attacks the central nervous system), or developmental challenges
- Key benefits: flexible day-to-day schedule, travel opportunities, wide variety of tasks and responsibilities
- Advice from the Field
  - Work closely with prescribers
  - Good communication skills and ability to work with little direction

**Mail Service/Mail Order**
- The demand for mail order pharmacy is growing because it provides people with a less expensive and convenient way to get their prescription medications
- Dispense medication and also can serve as a direct link to patients. For example, most mail service pharmacies have toll-free numbers for patients to call when they have questions about their medication
- Responsible for counseling callers and helping them understand their treatment in the same way that a pharmacist would in a more traditional pharmacy or drugstore
- Key benefits: flexible schedule, opportunity to counsel patients (by telephone)
- Advice from the Field
  - Good communication skills, especially by telephone
  - Stay up-to-date on new drug information
  - Comfortable working in a highly automated work setting and/or in an office setting

**Managed Care and Pharmacy Benefit Management**
- Allow patients to get the appropriate medications at the right time in a convenient, cost-effective way
- Dispensing drugs, monitoring patient safety, developing clinical programs, and managing costs
- Most pharmacists in managed care work for health plans and pharmacy benefit management (PBM) companies
- PBMs work with pharmacies, pharmaceutical companies, and others to make sure that patients get the appropriate medications and clinical services they need at the most appropriate cost
- Key benefits: flexible schedule, ability to select appropriate medications for large groups of patients, wide variety of activities
- Advice from the Field
  - Understanding of economic principles and a strong interest in understanding business practices
  - Consider an internship to learn about the various job areas in managed care, from patient counseling to research to prevention of drug fraud, waste and abuse

**Medical Communications/Drug Information**
- Educate health care professionals, consumers, and other pharmacists about pharmaceutical products, including prescription drugs
- May provide these services internally, such as to employees of a pharmaceutical company or externally, such as answering questions from doctors or the local community
- Possible work settings include medical communications and medical education agencies, pharmaceutical manufacturers, schools, managed care organizations, poison control centers or hospitals
- Key benefits: work with a wide variety of people (professionals and consumers), use communications skills, manage multiple activities
- Advice from the Field
  - Solid writing skills, especially the ability to translate technical information in a simple way
  - Comfortable presenting in front of groups of people
  - Ability to think critically

**Nuclear**
- Preparing, testing, and dispensing radiopharmaceuticals for diagnosing and treating different types of cancers and many other diseases
- Managing laboratory procedures and testing equipment during drug production
- Supervise the handling, packaging and delivery of the radiopharmaceuticals
- Maintaining the work environment safety and in the disposal of hazardous bio-waste products
- Keep production and sales records and comply with company policies and legal regulations
- Work to improve health through safe and effective use of radioactive drugs to diagnose and treat diseases such as cancer
- Can work at a large hospital or at a commercial nuclear pharmacy where radioactive drugs are prepared and delivered to smaller hospitals
- Key benefits: tackle new challenges every day, flexible hours
- Advice from the Field
  - Consider rotations and other types of experiences in nuclear pharmacy to gain a better understanding of the required roles and responsibilities
  - Excellent attention to detail
  - Sometimes have to work early morning or night shifts

**Pharmaceutical Research and Drug Development**
- Research and development (often called R&D) is regarded as the backbone of the pharmaceutical industry
- Use their scientific knowledge to help develop new medications, test new substances, evaluate existing products, and create new dosage forms
- Making sure that drug labeling is accurate and meets the requirements of state and federal laws
- Key benefits: intellectually stimulating work, job flexibility, dynamic work environment, satisfaction obtained from helping discover and develop innovative new treatments
- Advice from the Field
  - Excellent interpersonal and communication skills
  - Strong background in medical chemistry, and consider pursuing additional advanced degrees and training
  - Occasional long hours and a high degree of pressure

**Pharmacist in Charge**
- Implements daily operations in coordination with the pharmacy management, and recruits the pharmacy staff and oversees their work
- Maintain a database of patient medical history, respond to patients about their pharmaceutical requirements and discuss prescriptions with doctors, nurses and other medical professionals
- Order, stock and store pharmaceutical drugs and are responsible for the disposal of outdated or contaminated drugs
- Make sure that the pharmacy complies with legal requirements and regulations

**Pharmacologist**
- Works with hospitals, biopharmaceutical companies and other organizations to discover and develop therapies to treat cancer and various other diseases
- Often collaborate with research scientists in various clinical development programs to conduct quantitative modeling, clinical trial simulations, and safety tests
- Studies, tests and analyzes pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics data about patients

**Pharmacy Law/Regulatory Affairs/Public Policy**
- Pharmacy law
  - Looks at laws and regulations that govern pharmacists, the pharmaceutical industry, and the profession
  - Pharmacist lawyers work in the areas of patent law, academia, medication-related litigation, boards of pharmacy, and related careers
  - The American Society for Pharmacy Law is an organization that provides insights for its members regarding food, drug, and medical device policies
- Regulatory affairs
  - concerned with the regulations and guidelines for clinical trials and other aspects of human research
  - Working through a variety of processes that are designed to protect human subjects participating in a trial
  - Can earn the professional credential of Regulatory Affairs Certification (RAC)
- Public policy
  - Works to determine how regulations, guidelines, and laws affect the patients for whom pharmacists provide care
  - May reach beyond pharmacy to population-based analysis not only in the United States but across the globe

**Pharmacy Manager**
- In charge of a pharmacy’s daily operations
- Provide efficient customer services, handle medications and other products, and maintain a patient medication database
- Consult with medical professionals about filling prescriptions and counsel patients about the medication intake and its possible side effects
- Prescribe over-the-counter medications for minor ailments and follow departmental and legal policies and procedures

**Specialty**
- Assembles and maintains patient medical histories and reviews them to evaluate a patient’s self-care needs
- While monitoring patients using electronic health records and other digital systems, they inform them about self-care medication, products and services
- Let patients know about available medication assistance programs and the enrollment requirements, and schedule meetings with the appropriate medical staff and financial counselors
- Work in sync with physicians, nurses and other healthcare professionals in managing the patient’s health condition and requirements

**Veterinary Pharmacy**
- Compounding medications to meet the specific needs of pets
  - Many veterinary prescriptions are hand-made based on the weight and size of the animal
  - The dosage, strength, and taste of the medicine can be adjusted to make it easier for pets to consume
- Must complete specialized training in veterinary pharmacology and therapeutics
- Key benefits: interaction with customers and their pets
- Advice from the Field
  - Strong interest in working with animals, be comfortable interacting with them
  - Be willing to work in a team with other veterinary professionals
Sources
2. https://pharmacyforme.org/why-pharmacy-may-be-right-for-you/career-paths/