

Career Prospects of Assistant Pharmacist Graduates of Plovdiv Medical University Bulgaria – In The Past and Present

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Abstract

Future career prospects are important for every young person. In the present conditions of market competition and continuous growth of unemployment, the new legislative requirements in health care under EU Regulations, affect the decision of young people related to their choice of professional field. Requirements set by the labour market imply quick adaptation and orientation, and flexible implementation of the knowledge and skills acquired in education. High quality education of health professionals is a major factor in the development and effective functioning of the healthcare system, and the achievement of a high standard of healthcare. This study examines the career prospects of assistant pharmacists, graduates of the Medical College, Medical University of Plovdiv. A questionnaire survey was carried out among a random selection of 2011, 2012 and 2019 graduates from the Medical College, Medical University of Plovdiv, Bulgaria. A total of 70 graduates were covered by the study. The results show, in addition to career success on the labour market, the level of satisfaction with training, as well as the desire of graduates to improve their professional competence. A large percentage of assistant pharmacists have success on the labour market. The graduates of the Medical College, Medical University of Plovdiv have a professional development that is timely and adequate to their qualification. There is an objective need for competent teaching staff, update of the teaching resources as well as conducting postgraduate courses in line with the European standards.

Keywords: Assistant Pharmacist, career prospects, education, Healthcare.

Introduction

Nowadays, in Bulgaria, the quality education of medical professionals is a major factor in the development and effective functioning of the healthcare system, and the achievement of a high standard of healthcare. At the heart of every healthcare system are human resources. They are the key for achieving healthcare goals, both national and global. The attention on human resources in healthcare is also focused on the education of future healthcare professionals, as the quality of health care tomorrow is highly dependent on the professional and moral ethics of students today (Kasnakova P. 2018). The career development of professionals who have achieved the relevant educational and qualification degree is the most objective market evaluation of the quality of education provided by an educational institution (Gladilov S. and Delcheva E. 2009). The Medical College is a part of the Medical University of Plovdiv, which is an autonomous, self-governing state medical university, an independent legal entity, established on the grounds of the state legislation (art.9, para 2, i.1; art.17, para 3 of the Higher Education Act).

The Assistant Pharmacist Programme at the Medical College of Medical University of Plovdiv was established in 1961. In the course of time, it has changed, developed and improved in order to respond to the needs of present times, and the new market and economic situation. The interest demonstrated by young people is considerable, due to the excellent career prospects. Assistant Pharmacist students acquire training in the Healthcare Professional Field in accordance with the requirements of the law. In their college studies, they learn fundamental, specialized and applied disciplines in order to apply the acquired skills in healthcare that correspond to human needs of health services.

The qualification description states that Assistant Pharmacist is a healthcare professional who is involved in the drug manufacturing and drug-distribution processes in our country. He or she should have high qualification, good general knowledge, love their humane profession, strive to learn the latest in the field of pharmacy, promote the development of medical care, and promote health in our country. The Assistant Pharmacist prepares and provides dosage forms, medicinal products, cosmetics, nutritional supplements, medical and sanitary supplies, etc., within his or her competence, under the supervision of a Master Pharmacist, or independently. They assume personal, moral, material, and legal responsibility (<https://mu-plovdiv.bg/>).

Main Text

The purpose of this study is to investigate the career prospects of Assistant Pharmacist students at the Medical College, Medical University of

Plovdiv after completing their education. The study aims also to present and analyse the level of satisfaction with training, as well as the interest of graduates to enhance their professional competences.

Materials and methods: A questionnaire survey was carried out on random selection of 2011, 2012 and 2019 graduates from the Medical College, Medical University of Plovdiv, Bulgaria. The study covered a total of 70 graduates.

Results and discussion: The analysis of the survey results is expressed as a percentage of each answer relative to the total number of respondents. November 2011, 31 respondents of which 27 women and 4 men. November 2012, 19 respondents, of which 16 women and 3 men. November 2019, 20 respondents, of which 18 women and 2 men.

To the question: **"Are you currently employed?"**

The respondents answered as follows: for 2011, out of 31 respondents 26 answered "Yes" and 5 "No", i.e. 84%; 2012 - 19 answered "Yes", which is 100%. The results of the 2019 survey are similar to those of 2012 - out of 20 respondents 18 saying "Yes" and 2 answering that "they are starting work within 1 month". (Figure 1)

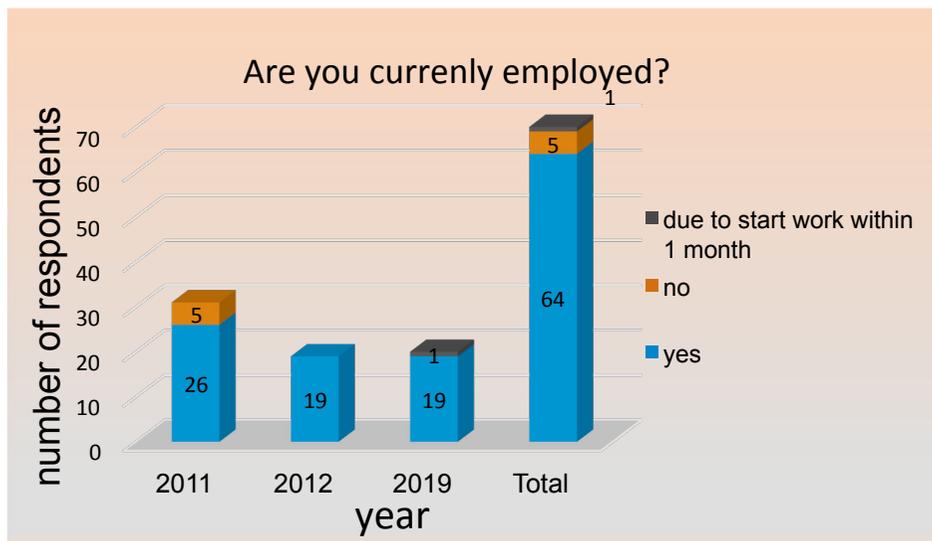
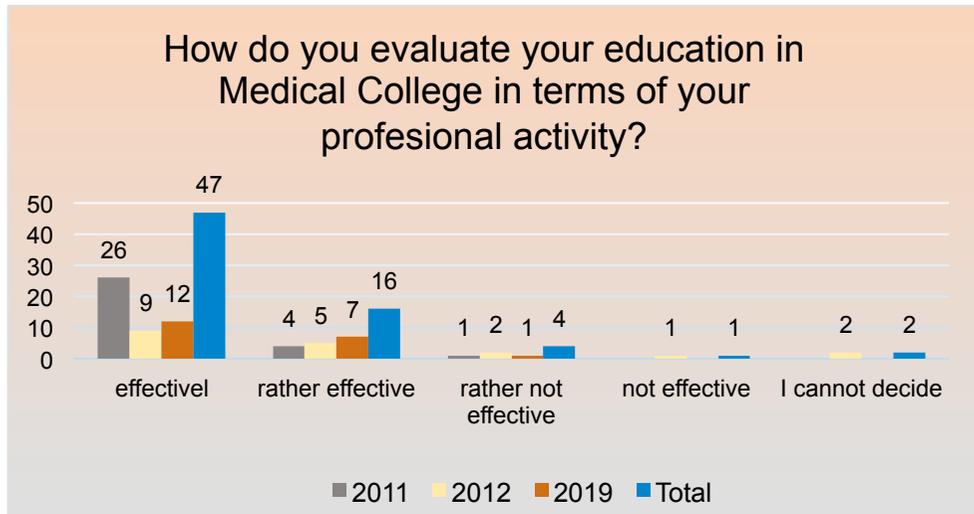


Figure 1. Career development of Assistant Pharmacists by years

In the current difficult economic situation in the country, it is a fact that the students find professional employment quickly. This can be attributed to the highly-qualified academic staff, the well-developed Educational Programme coordinated with the Uniform State Requirements (Ordinance on Uniform State Requirements, prom. S.G. 87 of 7.10.2008), updated Curricula that comply with the European requirements, and

available access to the necessary learning resources: continuously updated facilities and library fund. In support of this are the questions of the structured questionnaire, which present the students' opinion on the quality



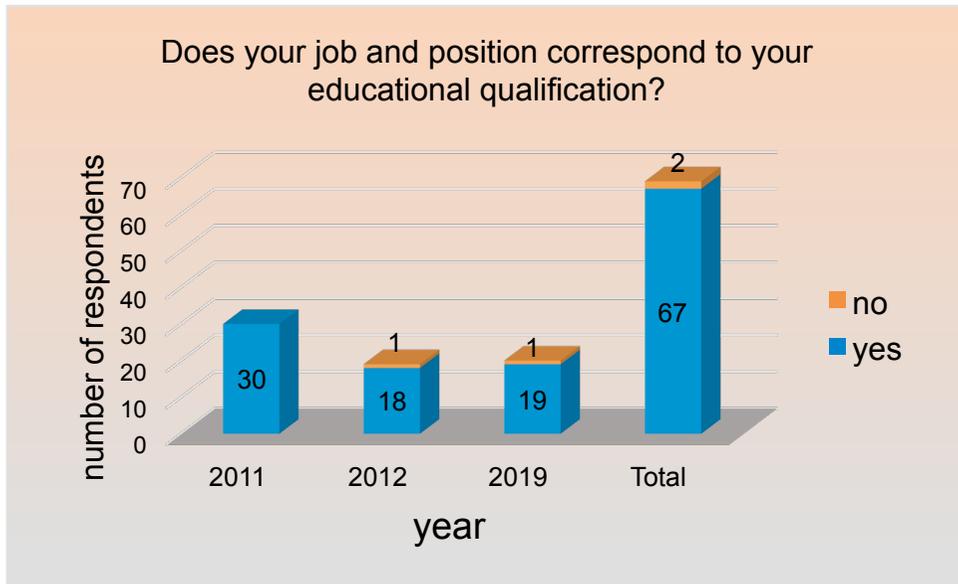
of the teaching process at the Medical College of Plovdiv, shown on Figure 2.

Figure 2. Satisfaction of Assistant Pharmacist graduates with the quality of training at the Medical College of Plovdiv

A high relative share of the graduates evaluate positively their education at the Medical College of Plovdiv, which shows that their expectations have been fulfilled, and also serve as a proof for the competence of the academic and non-academic staff of lecturers. High quality education is a responsibility of all participants - lecturers, students, management bodies, as the ultimate goal is to improve the quality of healthcare (Kilova, Bakova and Kitova, 2017).

In the course of their education, Assistant Pharmacist students acquire knowledge in general education, general medicine, and specialized subjects that comply with the Uniform State Requirements. The practical classes in the specialized subjects such as Pharmacology, Pharmaceutical Technology, Biopharmacy, Pharmacognosy, Regulation of Pharmaceuticals, Practical training, which form an integral part of the education of the students, allow students to apply in practice the acquired knowledge and skills. The pre-graduation Internship helps students to build communicative skills and ability to work in a team. The disciplines studied, the acquired knowledge and skills, as well as the communicative skills formed during the pre-graduation internship are adequate to the job positions occupied by the graduates. Communication is increasingly highlighted for its importance and

significance for the career development of the healthcare professional, and for implementing his or her value system (Toriyova B. and Kasnakova P. 2015). In their daily job, Assistant Pharmacists have many and different



interpersonal contacts and healthcare cases, which put their communication and professional skills to the test. (Figure 3)

Figure 3. Answers to the question: "Does your job and position correspond to your educational qualification?"

The Assistant Pharmacist participates actively in the production of the medicines, as well as in their supply, and distribution. The Assistant Pharmacist may perform all activities under the supervision of the Master Pharmacist, with the exception of: providing prescription drugs, control and consultations related to prescribed medicinal products (art. 220, para 3 of the Law on Medicinal Products in Human Medicine).

The high qualification standard acquired by Assistant Pharmacist students and the characteristics of the education are an indicator for their career prospects.

The November 2019 survey included an additional question about the needs of new graduates to enhance their professional competence and qualifications. (Figure 4)

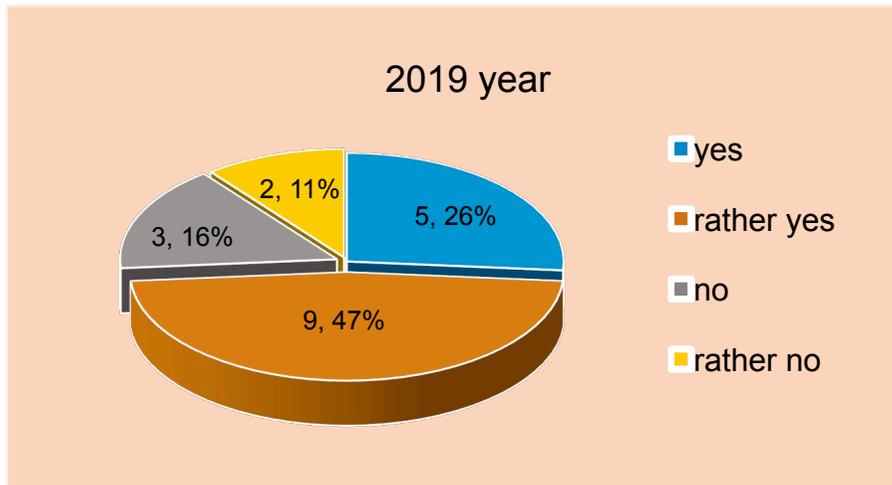


Figure 4. Respondents' answers regarding their interest to upgrade their professional qualification

The study shows that graduates are motivated and willing to succeed in their professional development (Figure 3), which is an indicator of the need to train Assistant Pharmacists. The quality of healthcare strongly depends on the professional, moral and ethical training of students in medical programmes today. Therefore, it is necessary for the academic teaching staff at medical universities to pay special attention to the quality of medical training to prepare future medical specialists for the challenges and requirements of modern times. The search for new approaches to teaching and learning will lead to a new model of education that responds appropriately to the contemporary dynamic reality (Kilova, Mateva, Bakova and Kitova 2017).

Conclusion

A large percentage of Assistant Pharmacists are successful on the job market. The graduates of the Medical College, Medical University of Plovdiv have found employment that is timely and adequate to their qualification. There is an objective need for competent teaching staff, update of the teaching resources, as well as conducting postgraduate courses in line with the European standards.

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