

Pharmacy Technician

Pharmacy technicians assist licensed pharmacists by performing duties that do not require the professional skills and judgment of a licensed pharmacist and assisting in those duties that require the expertise of a pharmacist. Pharmacy technicians are employed in every practice setting where pharmacy is practiced, including institutional, community, home care, long-term care, mail order, and managed care pharmacies. Technicians are also employed in education, research, and the pharmaceutical industry.

Technicians may be trained on the job or by completing a formal program. Some formal training programs meet the program accreditation standards established by the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists.



Career Description

According to the 1991-1994 Scope of Pharmacy Practice Project, pharmacy technicians spend their time in the following ways:

- 26%—collect, organize, and evaluate information to assist pharmacists in serving patients
- 21%—develop and manage medication distribution and control systems; about half of this time is spent preparing, dispensing, distributing, and administering medications
- 7%—provide drug information and education

These percentages, however, may vary widely for many reasons, including the wide range of training and qualifications of pharmacists, the use of technicians as directed by a given supervisory pharmacist, and variations in state pharmacy practice laws.

The ASHP Accreditation Standard for Pharmacy Technician Training Programs specifies that graduates of programs should be able to perform the following functions (among others):

- Assist the pharmacist in collecting, organizing, and evaluating information for direct patient care, drug use review, and departmental management
- Receive and screen prescription medication orders for completeness and accuracy
- Use pharmaceutical and medical terms, abbreviations, and symbols appropriately
- Prepare and distribute medications in a variety of health system settings
- Perform arithmetical calculations required for usual dosage determinations and solutions preparation
- Use knowledge of general chemical and physical properties of drugs in manufacturing and packaging operations
- Use knowledge of proper aseptic technique and packaging in the preparation of medications
- Collect payment and/or initiate billing for pharmacy services and goods
- Purchase pharmaceuticals, devices, and supplies according to an established plan in a variety of health systems
- Control medication, equipment, and device inventory according to an established plan in a variety of health systems
- Maintain pharmacy equipment in preparing, storing, and distributing investigational drug products
- Assist the pharmacist in monitoring the practice site and/or service area for compliance with federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and professional standards
- Assist the pharmacist in preparing, storing, and distributing investigational drug products

- Assist the pharmacist in the monitoring of drug therapy
- Assist the pharmacist in identifying patients who desire counseling on the use of medications, equipment, and devices
- Understand the use and side effects of prescription and nonprescription drugs used to treat common disease states
- Appreciate the need to adapt the delivery of pharmacy services for the culturally diverse
- Maintain confidentiality of patient information
- Communicate clearly orally and in writing
- Use computers to perform pharmacy functions
- Demonstrate ethical conduct in all activities related to the delivery of pharmacy services



Employment Characteristics

Pharmacy technicians typically provide their services in one or more of the following settings: health systems, community pharmacies, chain pharmacies, and home care pharmacies.



Salary

Salary for entry-level pharmacy technicians in 2002 was \$19,000; overall average was \$27,000; those in the upper ranges earned \$35,000. Refer to Section IV, Table 5 of this *Directory* for more information, or see www.ama-assn.org/go/hpsalary.



Educational Programs

Length. Programs are generally 15 weeks or longer and consist of a minimum of 600 hours of training (contact) time. Graduates generally receive a certificate or AS degree.

Prerequisites. Applicants should have a high school diploma or equivalent and meet institutional entrance requirements.

Curriculum. The professional curriculum includes formal instruction in didactic, practical, and laboratory areas of pharmacy practice. The curriculum consists of various aspects of pharmacy technician training pertinent to contemporary pharmacy practice. Courses include pharmacy mathematics/calculations, pharmacy for pharmacy technicians, sterile products, pharmaceutical care delivery systems, computer systems for pharmacy, and payment for pharmacy services.



Certification

After completing their training, technicians may become a Certified Pharmacy Technician (CPhT) by successfully taking the national certification examination offered by the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board.



Inquiries

Careers

American Association of Pharmacy Technicians (AAPT)

PO Box 1447
Greensboro, NC 27402
877 368-4771
336 333-9068 Fax
www.pharmacytechnician.com

Pharmacy Technician

National Pharmacy Technician Association
3707 FM 1960 RD W, Suite 460
Houston, TX 77068
281 866-7900 or 888 247-8700
281 895-7320 Fax
www.pharmacytechnician.org

Certification

Pharmacy Technician Certification Board
1100 15th Street NW, Suite 730
Washington, DC 20005-1707
800 363-8012
202 429-7596 Fax
www.ptcb.org

Program Accreditation

American Society of Health System-Pharmacists
Accreditation Services Division
7272 Wisconsin Avenue
Bethesda, MD 20814
301 664-8720
301 664-8872 Fax
E-mail: llifshin@ashp.org
www.ashp.org