

Shortage of pharmacists

Shortage of Pharmacists



in the United States

Untapped resource

International pharmacy graduates

By International Pharmacist Graduate Association in the United States (IPHARM-US)

Facts

- ▶ There is a major problem
 - shortage of pharmacists in the nation
- ▶ Unexpected growth in medication use
 - ↑ demand for pharmacists
 - has outpaced supply
- ▶ The profession is realizing
 - an acute pharmacist shortage (HHS & HRSA)
 - expected to persist for some time

HHS = Department of Health and Service

HRSA= Health Resources and Services Administration

Facts

- 21% nationwide vacancy rate
 - for pharmacists, in 2006 (7)
- ▶ 3,904 open chain pharmacist positions
 - as of January 1, 2007 (8)
- ▶ Media bombarding the public
 - about pharmacist shortage
- ▶ Educators, pharmacists, patients
 - shouting for help about the crisis for a decade.

Source: 7 = American Hospital Association
(AHA), 8 = National Association of Chain Drug
Stores (NACDS)

Causes of the shortage

- An aging population
- More pharmacist retiring > joining the field
- A striking ↑ in prescription drugs dispensed
 - greatly outpaces the ↑ in pharmacist supply
- Higher educational standards for pharmacists
- ▶ Attractive careers in areas other than pharmacy
 - The growing biotechnology industry

Causes of the shortage (cont.)

- ▶ Limited use of automation and pharmacy technicians
- ▶ ↑ Female pharmacists
- ▶ Changes in
 - insurance policies and federal pharmaceutical regulations
 - which made drugs available to more people
- ▶ More drugs being manufactured and advertised to the public
- ▶ International pharmacists cannot be licensed
 - because of rigid requirements
 - ▶ on English proficiency test.

Immediate solutions to the shortage

Build pharmacy schools

- ▶ Seats are limited.
- ▶ 500 - 1,700 applications
- ▶ Only 50-120 seats

- ▶ An increase in technology
- ▶ The use of pharmacy technicians

Hire from overseas pools

- ▶ Foreign pharmacists (FPGEE cert. program)


- Give choices for communication skill test.

Foreign Grads - TOEFL iBT Ordeal

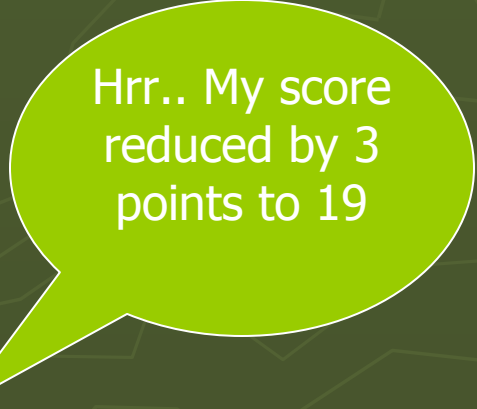
- ▶ International pharmacy graduates currently
 - accounts for ~ 6 % of the U.S. pharmacist workforce
 - have to achieve a score of 26 on the TOEFL iBT speaking.
- ▶ The average score of TOEFL iBT Speaking in 2007 (12)
 - U.S. candidates: 22
 - candidates from English speaking countries: 22
- ▶ Format of TOEFL iBT
 - Speaking on academic and campus life related topics in seconds?

Score errors – TOEFL iBT

- ▶ In rescoring process, some test takers:
 - received a score of 22 on the speaking section
 - their scores have either changed to 19, or 26 after requesting for rescoring
- ETS has the opportunity
 - ▶ to ↑ its revenues
 - ▶ from its score errors
- \$60 charged for rescoring
 - ▶ if score is the same



Hey! I got
26 after
rescoring



Hrr.. My score
reduced by 3
points to 19

TOEFL iBT-Speaking is deeply flawed

- ▶ Too mechanical
 - No face to face interview
 - Use of recording system
 - More focus on organizing speech in the time limit
- ▶ The content of the exam
 - not related to pharmacy profession
- ▶ Seems to measure intelligibility or other aspects
 - rather than the language ability

Validity of TOEFL iBT – “26” on speaking

- ▶ Keeping this in mind, some TOEFL iBT test takers have:
 - received advanced degrees from American universities,
 - worked for universities and companies successfully and
 - continue to receive a score < 26 on Speaking section
- ▶ In addition, others have responded that even though
 - English is their primary language,
 - they have lived in the U.S. for several years, and
 - communicate exclusively in English on a daily basis
- ▶ They continue....
 - to score < 26 on the Speaking section of TOEFL iBT.
- ▶ This indicates that...
- ▶ the “TOEFL iBT Speaking may not be a valid test for the real world.”

Foreign nurses/doctors/pharmacists

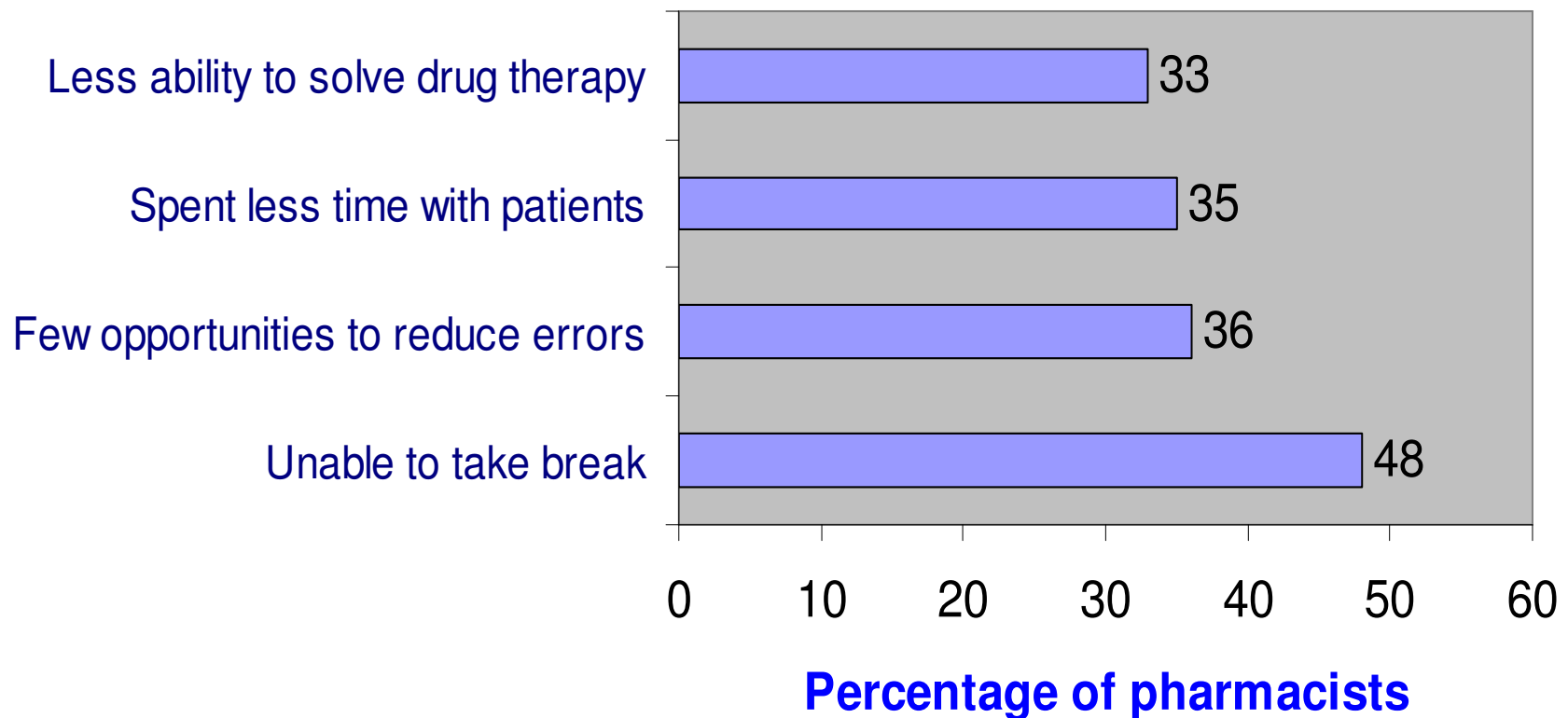
- ▶ Physician board
 - developed its own communication skills
- ▶ Foreign nurses are given the choice
 - to take IELTS
- ▶ CGFNS has agreed that
 - IELTS met statutory since 2003 (sec.3434, IIRIRA)
- ▶ **Nurses and doctors** are
 - in the **same** healthcare system as **pharmacists**

CGFNS =The Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools

IIRIRA =The Illegal Immigrant Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act



Workload conditions impact the public health and safety

Burden of Pharmacists (Survey)




Source: 15 = National Workforce Study Survey,
2000-2004

Impacts of the shortage - patient safety

- ▶ Pharmacist shortages  patient safety.
- ▶ Potentially  the risk of dispensing errors
- ▶ Restricts pharmacists' ability in maintaining
 - safe
 - accurate
 - efficient medication distribution systems

Impacts of the shortage - patient safety (cont.)

- ▶  risk of dispensing potential drug-drug interactions
 - with higher pharmacist workload (16)
- ▶ Lessening the number of opportunities
 - for pharmacists to interact with patients
- ▶ Some pharmacists
 - filled 500 prescriptions a day
 - could spend 10 seconds with each patient

Impacts to Profession (cont.)

- A good pharmacist is one that
 - interacts with customers
 - establishes trust and answers questions
- An enormous reduction in time spent on patients
 - (-) impact to image of the profession

Impacts to consumers

- ▶ An inconvenience
- ▶ Patients waiting longer
 - to have prescriptions filled (19)
- ▶ No one answer their questions.
- ▶ Workload pressures
 - ↓ pharmacists' time available to counsel patients



Impacts to economy

- ▶ Hold back the roll-out of pharmacies (20)
- ▶ “Despite high wages,
 - when pharmacists
 - ▶ reduce their hours or quit
 - ▶ because of the stressed out work atmosphere
 - clearly it’s not “all about money.”” (21)



Impacts to economy (cont.)

- Chains, drugstores, hospitals, health systems
 - bid against one another
 - to staff their expanding facilities
- Can lead to
 - shorter pharmacy business hours
 - closing
- The average length of time required
 - to fill a vacant pharmacist position, ~ 6 months.
 - and has continued to rise. (AHSP)

Trends

- ▶ Today's 35 million citizens
 - age over 65 will jump
 - to 40 million by 2010. (24)

- ▶ If actions are not taken
 - to develop a solid health care workforce
 - the healthcare delivery system will be in danger
 - especially for most vulnerable citizens, seniors (24)

In the end:



It's necessary for pharmacists to have

"a unified voice."

We ask for a fair chance
at achieving our U.S. pharmacy
licensure.

“We are trained as pharmacists.
We want to help by using our skills.”

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www.ipharm.us

contact@ipharm.us