

Abstract

Pharmacy intern involvement in COVID-19 immunization practices in New York State

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Background

In 2018, New York (NY) state passed legislation allowing certified pharmacy interns to administer immunizations. As COVID-19 vaccines became available, the urgent demand for immunizers created an emerging role for pharmacy interns in a variety of practice settings. The purpose of this study is to describe the experiences of pharmacy interns in providing COVID-19 immunizations.

Methods

A 34-item survey was developed and administered to students enrolled in a Doctor of Pharmacy program in Brooklyn, NY from December 2020 to March 2021. Data collected included: perceptions of immunization readiness, participation in immunization initiatives in various practice settings, description of immunization experiences, and perceptions on the role of pharmacists.

Results

Two-hundred thirty-one students completed the survey (response rate 38.5%). The majority of respondents (79%) completed training at school. Using a 5-point Likert scale (1=very uncomfortable, 5=very comfortable), 52% respondents felt comfortable/ very comfortable providing COVID-19 immunizations prior to participation, and increased to 69.4% after participation. Over half respondents (n=129) participated in COVID-19 vaccinations as part of school during Introductory Pharmacy Practice Experiences (5.4%), Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experiences (27.9%), and Co-curricular events (17.8%). Three main themes emerged regarding the role of the pharmacist: 1) value of providing information to patients as most accessible health care provider, 2) contributor to public health and 3) appreciation for compounding skills.

Conclusions

Pharmacy interns were a timely addition to the urgent need for immunizers to participate in the COVID-19 pandemic vaccination efforts through pharmacy practice in NY. Public health activities add invaluable experience to pharmacy training.

Public health or related research

