

Title: What do legislators want? Identifying best strategies to teach pharmacy advocacy

Section I: What is your research question?

Research Question: How should pharmacists and student pharmacists engage with legislative staff and legislators to advocate for or against healthcare-related legislation?

The goal of this project is to identify and disseminate best practices for engaging with legislative staff and legislators about pharmacy-related and healthcare-related legislation. These evidence-based practices will inform educators' strategies for developing professional advocates within PharmD curricula across all four US census regions. The proposed project aligns with AACP Strategic Priority 3.1.2 through engaging multiple institutions across the US to answer this research question. Additionally, it aligns with 3.4.5 as our findings can influence advocacy efforts to redefine pharmacy practice in healthcare through provider status, independent prescribing efforts, and other key professional advocacy initiatives.

Description of How Idea is Unconventional and Creative

As advocacy educators, we often use anecdotal evidence from our experiences as advocates to teach students best practices. Few resources exist that are pharmacy-specific on best practices for engaging legislative staff and legislators about profession-related bills and issues.^{1,2} We believe this topic is essential as the 2009 AACP Curricular Change Summit identified advocacy as one of key abilities for students in pharmacy curricula, potentially being the most important.³ We argue that advocacy is the “essential competence” and it is imperative to train our students to be effective advocates as efforts at the state and federal level are significantly advancing the practice of pharmacy. These include reimbursement reform for pharmacists and expanding scope of practice to include a variety of services, for example contraceptive access.⁴⁻⁶ We believe this project is unconventional and especially relevant as it focuses upon gathering evidence to inform teaching strategies in the area of advocacy across the US. The Center for the Advancement of Pharmacy Education (CAPE) Educational Outcomes 2013 include 3.3 Patient Advocate, but do not address being a Professional Advocate; this project is pushing the academy to consider the importance of this distinction.⁷ Further, COVID-19 and virtual engagement with legislators has required different approaches than those typically taught and utilized. This project will enable us to identify which strategies legislative staff and legislators prefer and those not as effective.⁸

Hypothesis and Specific Aims

Many pharmacy faculty, pharmacy association leaders, and lobbyists teach students and pharmacists best practices for advocating for the profession and patients based on their own experiences of what has worked or not worked. The purpose of this project is to identify best strategies for students and pharmacists in engaging with legislative staff and legislators to advance pharmacy-related and healthcare-related legislation. We hypothesize that there are best practices for engaging with legislators and their staff which may vary based on their political party, committee service, legislative body, state, and population density. The National Conference of State Legislatures provides best practices for engaging with state legislatures on many topics, including one guide for oral health professionals. We hypothesize there will be unique differences in best practices regarding pharmacy-specific legislation.⁹

- Aim 1: Assess preferences of elected legislators and their legislative staff serving in state government related to engagement on policy issues by healthcare professionals and pharmacists, in particular.
- Aim 2: Compare and contrast findings across different geographical regions and by political party.
- Aim 3: Compare and contrast findings based on legislative service and affiliation.

Section II: How will you test your idea?

Project Design and Implementation Plan

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To answer our research question and hypothesis, we will utilize key informant interviews with legislative staff and legislators from one state within each of the four US Census regions. Our multi-institution team was selected to ensure representation of advocacy and policy experts across the major geographic regions of the US. We also have an interprofessional collaboration with a policy expert at the College of Public Health at The Ohio State University. This study will utilize mixed methods as data mining of legislative websites will be conducted by student researchers to collect key demographic information (legislative body, political party, committee service, etc.). Semi-structured interviews will be utilized to identify how legislators prefer to be engaged by pharmacists and students on healthcare-related legislation and how they want to be informed of these issues to determine their stance. The Advocacy Strategy Framework will be utilized to ground the interview questions.

We plan to partner with state pharmacy associations in each state (Idaho, Maryland, Ohio, North Carolina) to develop a list of potential participants that is balanced in a 1:1 fashion, based on state, political party, and legislative service on healthcare related committees. Interviews will be conducted until saturation is met for each state, which we anticipate will require ~20-25 interviews. Interviews will be conducted by students who will be paid research assistants after they have been trained on use of the interview guide and how to conduct interviews for consistency between the two research assistants. Interviews will be conducted over videoconferencing software, recorded, and transcribed by the student researchers. Alternatively, if participants do not have the capability to participate in videoconferencing or prefer not to, interviews can be conducted over the phone and recorded using a voice recording device for transcription. Inductive and deductive coding will be utilized to code the transcripts using NVivo coding software. Three members of our research team will independently code the transcripts using the developed codebook. These team members will meet to identify consensus around coding and resolve any discrepancies. From this coding, themes will be identified by the entire research team and illustrative quotes will be selected.

Essential Data This Study Will Generate

Essential data that will be generated from this project includes identification of pharmacy and healthcare-specific advocacy best practices for faculty at schools and colleges of pharmacy to utilize to prepare their students to be effective advocates for their profession and patients. As a multi-school project across all four US census regions, we will be able to identify if different advocacy strategies are required across differential geographical regions, for different political parties, and based upon different legislative service and affiliations.

Next Steps and Future Projects

If this project is successfully funded, we plan to disseminate findings in a political science, interprofessional or pharmacy education journal and at the AACP annual meeting along with disseminating through one of the investigator's advocacy channel, The Grassroots Pharmacist. These findings will be implemented at our institutions to enhance our preparation of students as advocates and will be disseminated with state and national pharmacy associations. We hope to use our findings to update one investigator's book, "Leadership and Advocacy for Pharmacy", and publish as an open access resource.

Contribution to Teaching, Learning and Assessment

While there is a body of literature describing advocacy-related educational interventions in the pharmacy literature, there is opportunity to expand upon available resources to describe strategies to employ when teaching students to advocate. Bzowycyk and Janke have previously developed a consensus definition of being an advocate for the profession of pharmacy, and our work can expand

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upon this definition from those we are trying to influence through our advocacy.¹⁰ Using qualitative analysis, our research can expand upon available publications to inform best practices to equip our students with the skills to be advocates in their communities and within the healthcare system.

Budget

Funds are requested to support the data generation of this research project, qualitative analysis software, travel to AACP Annual Meeting for one primary investigator and Vengage to generate visual storytelling of our results in our poster and manuscript. We will need two licenses of the coding software (primary investigator already has a license.) The study institution of the primary investigator has videoconferencing software to conduct and record interviews. If study participants prefer, interviews will be conducted over the phone and recorded using a voice recording device. Student researchers will be essential to support this project to recruit legislators or legislative staff for participation, schedule and conduct interviews, and transcribe interviews. We anticipate 20-25 legislators/state (80-100 total) will be needed to reach saturation and have allotted one hour per legislator to coordinate and conduct the interview (90 hours). An additional 30 hours have been allotted to support transcription of these interviews (software to generate initial transcript, student worker to verify accuracy). Any remaining transcript verification needed beyond student researcher funds will be conducted by the primary investigator.

Item	Unit Cost	Quantity	Total Cost
NVivo Coding Software	\$650	2 units	\$1300
Research Dissemination (Meeting Registration)	\$700	1 unit	\$700
Student Researchers (Interviews, Transcription)	\$15/hour	120 hours	\$1,800
Vengage Access	\$99/year	1 year	\$99
Sony Voice Recording Device	\$100	1 unit	\$100
Total			\$3999

Project Timeline

Month(s)	Research Activities
January 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Submit grant to AACP
February-April 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Build interview guide; pilot with peers and state pharmacy associations ▫ Finalize interview guide ▫ Develop list of legislators to invite for participation in the study ▫ Develop preliminary codebook
May 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Submit IRB protocol for approval to WU, OSU, ISU, UM
June 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Receive notification from AACP, submit IRB approval if awarded grant
July-December 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Conduct interviews until saturation is met (anticipate 20-25 legislators from each state → 80-100 total) ▫ Transcribe interviews
January-February 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Co-PIs to code interview transcripts and code transcripts ▫ Research team to identify themes and select illustrative quotes ▫ Submit abstract to AACP AM 2022
March-May 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Manuscript preparation ▫ Poster development
June 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Submit manuscript to peer-reviewed journal

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