Exploring Curricular Integration in Pharmacy Schools
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Background
- The need for curriculum integration in pharmacy education is becoming more apparent as the field evolves and accreditation standards necessitate a curriculum structure where the didactic and experiential aspects of the curriculum are in close alignment.1
- Curriculum integration aims to provide students the opportunity to problem solve and address healthcare needs through innovation, critical thinking, and self-discovery which will position them to be practice-ready professionals and leaders.2
- Curriculum integration consists of horizontal and vertical branches, as well as varying pedagogies and strategies to create a framework for teaching and learning.3
- Horizontal integration is forming a link across basic science disciplines.
  - Vertical integration is taking information from the basic and social sciences and extending that through the clinical or more experiential aspects of the curriculum.

Objectives
1. Identify the organizational thread used to integrate knowledge across the curriculums by integration.
2. Determine what pedagogies, including learning environment, didactic and experiential aspects of the curriculum are in close alignment.1, 2
3. Determine how pharmacy schools are evaluating the success of the curriculum integration.
4. Determine the challenges that schools face in an integrated curriculum.

Methods
This novel, IRB approved, cross-sectional study utilized a mixed methods approach consisting of two phases.

Phase 1: An online self-administered Qualtrics survey. The online survey contained open-ended and closed-ended questions that aligned with each aim. This poster reports the findings of the completed phase 1:
- Phase 1A: Questionnaire. The survey contained 6 to 10 questions per page for a total of 50-60 questions. The respondents were asked to provide demographic information, including personal context.
- Phase 1B: Interview. The survey included a self-assessment of the respondents’ perception of the quality of the curriculum integration. The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with statements regarding the quality of the curriculum integration.

Phase 2: Video interviews. The video interviews were semi-structured interviews. Responses to specific questions in Phase 1 determined if a follow-up interview was warranted to gain a more detailed understanding of integration from each participant’s context. This phase is ongoing.
- Our initial sample began with the top 60 pharmacy schools in the US according to the US News and World Report, with a goal sample population of 30 schools based on the following inclusion criteria:
  - Inclusion Criteria: These schools’ websites, including documents such as syllabi or curriculum overview were searched for the terms “integral, integration, or integrated.” The website described the curriculum as integrated in any sense, they were included in our sample population.
- Phase 1 surveys were sent via a personalized email and a reminder email was sent at one week intervals for 2 weeks. Additionally, a telephone call and/or email was sent to non-respondents to ensure that the email was sent to the correct person.

Percentage of Integration Models Based on Total Curriculum Hours

Results
After searching school’s websites for selection criteria, 35 schools met the criteria and were sent the survey. Fifteen schools completed the survey.

Conclusions
- Most common challenges are workload (83.3%) and faculty apprehension (84.6%). Least common challenges reported were financial concerns, university approval, and donor/alumni approval.

Limitations
- The results from phase 1 of this study suggest that most US pharmacy schools are using varying pedagogies and levels of integration with threaded being the most widely used and fragmented being the least.
- Pharmacy schools across the country are using similar methods to determine their programs’ success and many challenges to integration were identified.
- Pharmacy schools who are revising their curriculum to include more integration in order to meet accreditation standards should consider having open communication with all members involved in curriculum revision, including students, in order to be successful.
- The next step in our research is to continue to collect data for interview portion (phase 2) of the study.

References