

An Analysis of P1 Student Reflections on the Impact of White Coat Ceremony Participation

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Abstract:

Objectives: A formal White Coat Ceremony (WCC) is one means of welcoming students into the pharmacy profession. The impact of the WCC on students' professionalization has been sparsely documented. The objective of this study was to document the impact of WCC participation on student professionalization.

Methods: P1 students participated in the college's WCC at the conclusion of P1 Orientation program. Students were instructed on reflective practice, and assigned to reflect, in ≤ 300 words, on the impact of participation as the first graded assignment in their Foundations of Pharmacy (FoP) course. A grading rubric to discern critical reflection (cites future behavioral change); reflection; understanding; or non-reflection was developed for FoP to assess the reflections in a standardized fashion. Based on a word cloud generated from key reflection terms, the six most common reflection themes were extracted: Professionalism; Welcome to Pharmacy; Personal Achievement; Life-Long Learning; Patient Care; Code of Ethics. Authors then classified ≤ 3 themes per reflection to discern prevalence; "negative connotation" and "eye-opening experience" were also denoted.

Results: 218 of 225 students in Class of 2020 submitted valid reflection assignments; of these, 92% met critical reflection criteria, 8% reflection criteria. Four percent offered negative reflection on WCC, while 75% expressed an eye-opening experience/realization. Of 483 thematic classifications, the most prevalent were Personal Achievement (26%), Professionalism (21%), and Welcome to Pharmacy (18%).

Implications: For the majority, the WCC is an eye-opening experience with positive impacts on several aspects of student professionalization, as evidenced by critical reflection.

Objectives: A formal White Coat Ceremony (WCC) is one means of welcoming students into the pharmacy profession. The impact of the WCC on students' professionalization has been sparsely documented. The objective of this study was to document the impact of WCC participation on student professionalization. We report herein on one cohort's reflective experience with WCC.

Methods: ACPHS has conducted a WCC for over 20 years. Our ceremony typically includes the following elements:

- Procession of the P1 students into the venue where upper class students, faculty/staff and family are in attendance;
- Speeches on the significance of the white coat, words of wisdom from the Dean/Dean's Office; and keynote speaker on professional inspiration
- Cloaking of each student by faculty;
- Student-led recitation of the Pledge of Professionalism;
- Reception.

Results:

218 of 225 students in Class of 2020 submitted valid reflection assignments; of these, 92% met critical reflection criteria, 8% reflection criteria. Four percent offered negative reflection on WCC, while 75% expressed an eye-opening experience/realization.

Table 1 displays the thematic classifications that students reflected upon. Of 483 thematic classifications, the most prevalent were Personal Achievement (26%), Professionalism (21%), and Welcome to Pharmacy (18%).

Implications:

For the majority of P1 students, the White Coat Ceremony is an eye-opening experience with positive impacts on several aspects of student professionalization, as evidenced by students' Critical Reflection.

Reflection:

For the past four years, students have submitted written reflections on the impact of WCC participation as either a required part of their professional portfolio, or more recently as a graded assignment in P1 coursework.

225 Class of 2020 P1 students across two campuses participated in the College's WCC at the conclusion of P1 Orientation program, just prior to beginning fall semester. As their first graded assignment in their Foundations of Pharmacy (FoP) course, students were provided instruction on the theory and practice of reflection in the profession of pharmacy ("reflective practitioner"), and on the value of becoming an early adopter of reflective practice. Students were assigned to reflect on the impact of participation in the WCC, as follows:

In no more than 300 words, describe how the White Coat Ceremony made a meaningful impact on you, either negatively or positively, and how you will apply/change your future behaviors due to what you learned/experienced at the WCC as you embark on your journey as a student pharmacist/pharmacist? If you did not attend the WCC, please reflect on the Pledge of Professionalism that was recited at the WCC in place of the WCC participation reflection, and how you will apply/change your future behaviors due to reading the pledge as you embark on your journey as a student pharmacist/pharmacist.

Assessment Rubric to Discern Critical Reflection:

A grading rubric to assess the reflections in a standardized fashion was developed for the WCC reflection within the FoP course, specifically to discern critical reflection (cites future behavioral change); reflection; understanding; or non-reflection (Appendix)

Key Reflection Terms:

Based on a word cloud generated from key reflection terms from the students' reflections, the most common Reflection Themes were extracted:

Reflection Themes:

Professionalism: Pledge of Professionalism; lifetime of service to others and/or to the community; symbolism/tradition/cloaking

Welcome to Pharmacy: Welcome to the pharmacy profession; rite of passage; Student Pharmacist

Personal Achievement: Milestone; recognition; ceremony; pride; journey to graduation; validation of hard work to date

Life-Long Learning: Realization of importance of LLL; motivation to learn/dedication to profession/career; passion for profession; plethora of careers/opportunities in pharmacy

Patient Care: Patient welfare; health & wellness; team-based/collaborative care; patient advocacy and safety

Code of Ethics: Do what is right when no one is looking; responsibility; integrity

"Negative" connotation: (predominately) negative comments; waste of time; silly

"Eye-opening experience": originally thought WCC would be waste of time, but was now struck by impact

Analysis of Reflections:

Table 1: Thematic Content of White Coat Ceremony Reflections
218 student reflections
483 thematic classifications (up to 3 themes per reflection)

Reflection Theme	Number (up to 3 per reflection)	%
Professionalism	103	21.3
Welcome to Pharmacy	85	17.6
Personal Achievement	127	26.3
Life-Long Learning	62	12.8
Patient Care	81	16.8
Code of Ethics	25	5.2
Total	483	100



Appendix: Rubric for White Coat Ceremony Reflection for Foundations of Pharmacy

Assessment	3 (Critical Reflection)	2 (Reflection)	1 (Understanding)	0 (Non-reflection)
Critical Reflection	Student provides sufficient description and critical analysis of participation in the experience and applies it to future practice/behaviors. Reflection is thorough, thoughtful, detailed and clear.	Student provides sufficient description and analysis of participation of the experience but DOES NOT apply it to future practice/behaviors.	Student mentions, in general, the importance of WCC to future practice, but provides superficial analysis or is lacking description and analysis of personal WCC participation.	Student provides a brief, superficial, generalized analysis of the WCC, AND does not adequately reflect on the impact of the White Coat Ceremony (or Professionalism Pledge if not at WCC); reflection is incomplete or unclear.
Spelling and Grammar		No apparent spelling or grammar errors	No more than 3 spelling and/ or grammatical errors	More than 3 spelling and/ or grammatical errors

White Coat Ceremony Rubric: **Maximum point value = 5**
Reflections that exceed 300 words will be returned to the student for rewrite and reduction of 1 point; See course syllabus for policy regarding grade deductions for late assignments.

Bibliography:

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Holt, SL, Lau MS, Wong FL, Attridge RT et al. Tenets of Professionalism for Pharmacy Students. *Pharmacotherapy.* 2009;29(6):757-759.

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Photo of Students Reciting Pledge of Professionalism during White Coat Ceremony



Pledge of Professionalism

As a student of pharmacy, I believe there is a need to build and reinforce a professional identity founded on integrity, ethical behavior and honor.

To accomplish this goal of professional development, I will:

Develop a sense of loyalty and duty to the profession by contributing to the well-being of others and by enthusiastically accepting the responsibility and accountability for membership in the profession.

Foster professional competency through lifelong learning. I will strive for high ideals, teamwork, and unity within the professions in order to provide optimal patient care.

Support my colleagues by actively encouraging personal commitment to the "Oath of a Pharmacist" and the "Code of Ethics for Pharmacists" as set forth by the profession.

Dedicate my life and practice to excellence. This will require an ongoing re-assessment of personal and professional values.

Maintain the highest ideals and professional attributes to ensure and facilitate the formal relationship required of the pharmaceutical care giver.

The profession of pharmacy is one that demands adherence to a set of ethical principles. These high ideals are necessary to ensure the quality of care extended to the patients I serve. As a student of pharmacy, I believe this does not start with graduation; rather, it begins with my membership in this professional college. Therefore, I will strive to uphold this pledge as I advance toward full membership in the profession.

