

WWAMI CENTER FOR HEALTH WORKFORCE STUDIES

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Project Summary

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Retail Pharmacies in Washington State: Results of 2003 Workforce Survey

Background: The nation's supply of pharmacists has not met demand in recent years. In Washington State data have been available on demand for pharmacists in hospitals since 2001, but few data were available about nonhospital pharmacist demand. For this study, researchers surveyed retail pharmacies in Washington to estimate the demand for pharmacists, as well as pharmacy technicians and administrative/clerical staff, and to describe the impact of implementation of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) on retail pharmacies.

Methods: The study employed a mail survey of 1,349 retail pharmacies during the summer of 2003. The questionnaire included questions about staff employment, vacancies, and the impact of HIPAA implementation.

Major Findings:

- Washington's retail pharmacies report that pharmacists are much more difficult to recruit than are pharmacy technicians and administrative/clerical staff.

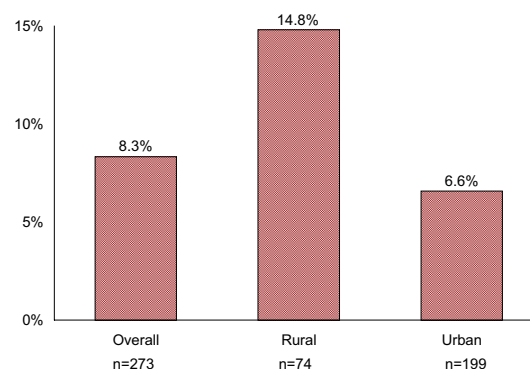
- Statewide an estimated 3,332 pharmacists are employed in the retail sector, and to fill vacancies an additional 350 pharmacists are estimated to be needed.

- While the pharmacist vacancy rate among retail pharmacies statewide is 8.3 percent, it is much higher in rural areas than in urban areas (14.8% vs. 6.6%).

- The financial impacts of complying with HIPAA most commonly cited among the pharmacies are training staff in HIPAA compliance (78%), change in staff commitments or cost (75%), and increased personnel time devoted to compliance (66%).

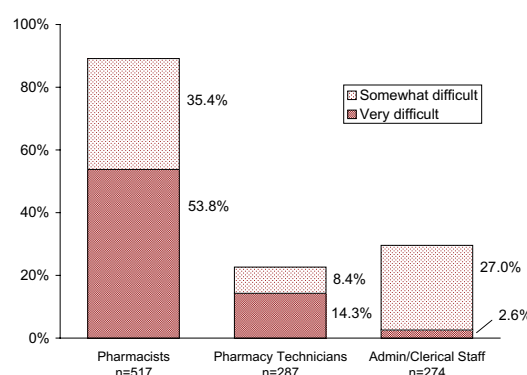
Policy Implications: Combining the results of this survey with the estimates from a survey of pharmacist vacancies in the state's hospitals, 403 pharmacists were needed statewide for retail and hospital pharmacies in 2003-2004. Pharmacy schools in Washington graduated 180 pharmacists in 2003—not enough to fill all of the vacancies across the state.

Estimated Pharmacist FTE Vacancy Rates* in Washington's Retail Pharmacies



* Calculated using data from respondents providing responses for both "FTEs employed" and FTEs vacant."

Difficulty Recruiting* Pharmacists, Pharmacy Technicians, and Administrative/Clerical Staff in Washington's Retail Pharmacies



* Among retail pharmacies that have recently recruited.

Findings from this study are more fully described in WWAMI Center for Health Workforce Studies Working Paper #100: Skillman SM, Hart LG, Bowditch E, Kirlin BA, Retail Pharmacies in Washington State: Results of 2003 Workforce Survey, December 2004.

