

# Assessment tool helps future pharmacists prepare for work in the community

June 30 2021, by Ali Bridges

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As the pharmacist profession evolves from dispensing to providing patient care services, there is a continued need for pharmacy curricula to reflect the profession's evolution. Credit: University of Arizona Health Sciences

A recent University of Arizona College of Pharmacy study suggests that Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs) may be a valuable means of assessing clinical skills while providing learning experiences for pharmacy students in community pharmacy settings. While the OSCEs

were designed to assess health care professionals in a clinical setting, there was limited data on its use in testing skills required in community pharmacies, until now.

For pharmacists working in retail, guiding patients on the use of over-the-counter (OTC) drugs is a common part of the job. According to a recent survey from the American Pharmacists Association (APhA), pharmacists make an average of 29 OTC recommendations each week, and approximately 81% of consumers purchase an OTC product their pharmacists recommended. As the profession evolves to providing more patient care services, there is a continued need for [pharmacy](#) curricula to maintain pace.

Self-Care Pharmacotherapeutics, a course required by the UArizona Doctor of Pharmacy program, teaches students the appropriate use of medications for self-care inquiries including selection of medications, appropriate dosing, and analysis of safety in a community pharmacy setting. But there was [limited information](#) on how best to assess the skills taught during this training. Seeking to fill this gap, a study by College of Pharmacy Assistant Professors Bernadette Cornelison, PharmD, MS, BCPS, and Beth Zerr, PharmD, BCACP, evaluated the use of a community pharmacy-based OSCE in assessing pharmacy students in their first year. The analysis found that students and facilitators believed the OSCE tested the skills needed to provide care in a community setting.

"We teach the self-care therapeutics course in the first semester of the first year in pharmacy school," explained Dr. Cornelison. "We felt it was important to innovate and evaluate new ways of teaching that would educate the students and, hopefully, help them retain information."

The study, published in the *Journal of the American College of Clinical Pharmacy*, also found that the design of the simulation reflected the

accurate amount of time a [student](#) intern would have to complete the Pharmacist' Patient Care Process (PPCP). This finding further demonstrates that the PPCP can be applied to patients even when time may seem limited. The standardization of this process is an important step in advancing pharmacists as recognized patient care providers across the country.

Drs. Cornelison and Zerr say the results show a strong case for fully implementing OSCEs in program curricula and are hopeful other colleges of pharmacy will, too.

**More information:** *Journal of the American College of Clinical Pharmacy*, [DOI: 10.1002/jac5.1472](https://doi.org/10.1002/jac5.1472)

Provided by University of Arizona

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