

# Pharmacy Students Self-Efficacy and Preparedness for Advanced Practice Experiences

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## DESCRIPTION

Pharmacy education has evolved significantly in recent decades to meet the demands of a rapidly changing healthcare environment. Advanced Practice Experiences (APEs), often referred to as clinical rotations or experiential learning, form a critical component of the Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm.D.) curriculum. These experiences provide students with hands-on training in real-world healthcare settings, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. However, the success of APEs depends largely on student's self-efficacy their belief in their ability to perform specific tasks and their overall preparedness for these experiences.

Self-efficacy, a concept introduced by psychologist Albert Bandura, refers to an individual's belief in their ability to execute behaviours necessary to achieve specific goals. In the context of pharmacy education, self-efficacy influences student's confidence in their clinical skills, problem-solving abilities, and communication competencies during APEs. Students who believe in their abilities are more likely to take initiative and perform well during clinical rotations. High self-efficacy enables students to overcome challenges and learn from their experiences. Confident students are more motivated to engage in lifelong learning and professional development. On the other hand, low self-efficacy can lead to anxiety, underperformance, and avoidance of challenging tasks, ultimately hindering professional growth.

A well-structured curriculum that integrates foundational knowledge with practical applications is essential. Courses focusing on pharmacology, pharmacotherapeutics, and clinical skills form the bedrock of preparedness. Early exposure to simulated patient interactions and problem-based learning can enhance confidence. Pre-APEs experiences, such as internships or volunteering in healthcare settings, provide valuable exposure to real-world scenarios. Simulation-based training, including role-playing, virtual reality, and standardized patient encounters, allows students to practice skills in a controlled environment. Support from faculty, preceptors, and peers plays a critical role in building self-efficacy. Constructive feedback and encouragement during clinical rotations can boost confidence and competence. Individual traits such as resilience, adaptability, and emotional intelligence influence self-efficacy. Students with a growth mindset are more likely to view challenges as opportunities for learning. Regular assessments, including Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs) and reflective practices, help students identify strengths and areas for improvement. Self-assessment tools can provide insights into students' perceived readiness for APEs.

The transition from classroom learning to clinical application can be daunting. Students often struggle to translate theoretical knowledge into practical decision-making. The demanding nature of pharmacy programs can leave students with limited time to develop clinical skills and engage in reflective practices. The high-pressure environment of

clinical rotations can lead to self-doubt, particularly when students encounter unfamiliar situations or critical feedback. Variability in the quality of preceptorship can impact students learning experiences. Inadequate guidance or lack of constructive feedback may hinder confidence-building. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach involving educators, institutions, and students themselves. Incorporating simulation exercises into the curriculum can help students practice clinical skills in a safe and supportive environment.

Group discussions and debriefing sessions can also facilitate shared learning and self-awareness. Incorporating OSCEs and practical exams throughout the curriculum ensures students are regularly tested on clinical competencies. Self-assessment and peer-assessment tools can provide insights into perceived and actual readiness. Workshops on stress management, mindfulness, and resilience training can help students cope with the challenges of clinical practice. Promoting a growth mind-set through positive reinforcement and constructive criticism is essential.

Training programs for preceptors should emphasize mentorship skills, communication techniques, and strategies to balance supervision with student autonomy. Evaluating the relationship between self-efficacy and APE outcomes requires robust assessment tools. Instruments such as the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) or pharmacy-specific scales can measure confidence levels. Tracking student's clinical performance, patient outcomes, and feedback from preceptors provides objective data. Interviews and focus groups with students can offer insights into their experiences and perceived readiness.

## CONCLUSION

Pharmacy student's self-efficacy and preparedness for Advanced Practice Experiences are critical determinants of their success in clinical settings. By addressing the factors influencing self-efficacy and implementing strategies to enhance readiness, pharmacy educators can empower students to excel in their professional roles. A collaborative effort involving curriculum design, mentorship, simulation-based training, and reflective practices is essential to bridge the gap between education and practice. Ultimately, fostering confident and competent pharmacy graduates will contribute to improved patient care and the advancement of the pharmacy profession.

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