Health Human Resources

Pharmacists in Canada, 2011

Pharmacists are regulated health professionals who assist their clients with medications to safely achieve desired health outcomes at home, in the community and in hospitals. They conduct research and work collaboratively with other health care providers to deliver optimal health care solutions. By incorporating best care principles that are patient-centred, outcome-oriented and evidence-based, their professional practice emphasizes drug therapy management of diseases and symptoms and the promotion of wellness and disease prevention.

The Numbers

Supply

- There were 32,132 pharmacists in Canada in 2011, an increase of 19.8% from 2006.
- The per-population supply of pharmacists in Canada has increased consistently since 2006. It rose from 82.1 per 100,000 population in 2006 to 92.9 per 100,000 population in 2011. Nova Scotia (125.2) and Newfoundland and Labrador (127.1) had the highest supply of pharmacists per 100,000 population, whereas the Northwest Territories (43.7) and Yukon (88.8) had the lowest supply of pharmacists per 100,000 population in 2011.

Demographics

- Gender distribution varied by province, and more than half of pharmacists nationally were female (59.7%), an increase since 2006 (57.2%). The highest percentage of female pharmacists was in Nova Scotia (71.4%); the lowest was in the Northwest Territories (36.8%).
- Almost one-third (31.5%) of employed pharmacists were older than 50, whereas more than one-quarter (28.0%) were in their 30s.
- The average age of pharmacists in Canada was 43.5. Ontario had the oldest pharmacists, with an average age of 44.8, while the youngest were in the Northwest Territories, with an average age of 39.8.
Education

- The majority of pharmacists had a baccalaureate degree (92.0%) as their current level of education.
- Of Canadian-educated pharmacists, 27.1% of pharmacists in Canada obtained their basic education in pharmacy in Ontario, followed by 17.3% in British Columbia and 17.2% in Alberta.
- About five percent (4.7%) of the pharmacists in the workforce were classified as new graduates, having a graduation year of 2010 or 2011. This proportion increased slightly from 4.2% in 2006.
- Among pharmacists in Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta, British Columbia and Yukon, 27.4% were internationally educated. One-fifth (20.7%) of those international graduates obtained their basic education in pharmacy in Egypt, followed by the United States (15.7%) and India (11.3%).

Employment

- Most pharmacists worked for a single employer (81.2%). Male pharmacists (21.2%) showed a higher tendency to have multiple employers than their female counterparts (17.2%).
- The majority of pharmacists (85.2%) were employed on a permanent basis, whereas less than 10 percent (7.9%) were self-employed.
- Almost two-thirds (64.2%) of pharmacists worked as staff pharmacists, while 29.8% worked as pharmacy owners or managers.
- More than three-quarters (75.4%) of pharmacists worked in a community pharmacy and 18.7% worked in hospitals and other health care facilities. A higher percentage of males (83.4%) worked in community pharmacies than females (70.1%).
- Almost half of the pharmacist workforce (44.6%) worked 40 or more hours per week. Conversely, 5.0% worked 14 or fewer hours per week.

Geography and Mobility

- Most (86.4%) employers of pharmacists were located in urban areas, while 12.4% were located in rural areas.
- Jurisdictions like Yukon and British Columbia had more pharmacists employed in urban areas—100.0% and 92.3%, respectively.
- Less-populous jurisdictions, such as Newfoundland and Labrador and New Brunswick, had only 62.6% and 72.7% of pharmacists in urban areas, respectively.

Talk to Us

For more information about the PDB, please send an email to pdb@cihi.ca.