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Background

The pharmaceutical industry has historically focused the majority of its HCP-related activities towards physicians. However, the evolving practice of pharmacy in the United States provides a basis for determining whether pharmacists are a potentially underserved population with regard to their interactions with the pharmaceutical industry.

The increasing significance of pharmacists' roles and their presumed increase in informational needs makes it feasible that an industry medical professional could add value to the practice of pharmacy. For example, several states have codified prescribing rights for the pharmacist.¹ Medication therapy management (MTM), a service where pharmacists are intimately involved in a patient's pharmacotherapy, as well as P&T committees rely heavily on insights from clinical pharmacists. Currently, pharmacists receive face-to-face information from the industry through sales consultants and little is known about their awareness and involvement with MSLs. Literature searches imply that no prior research has been conducted on this topic.

Objectives

- Gauge pharmacists' current awareness of and involvement with MSLs
- Ascertain pharmacists' influence on prescribers when selecting drug therapy
- Assess pharmacists' current methods for obtaining face-to-face drug information

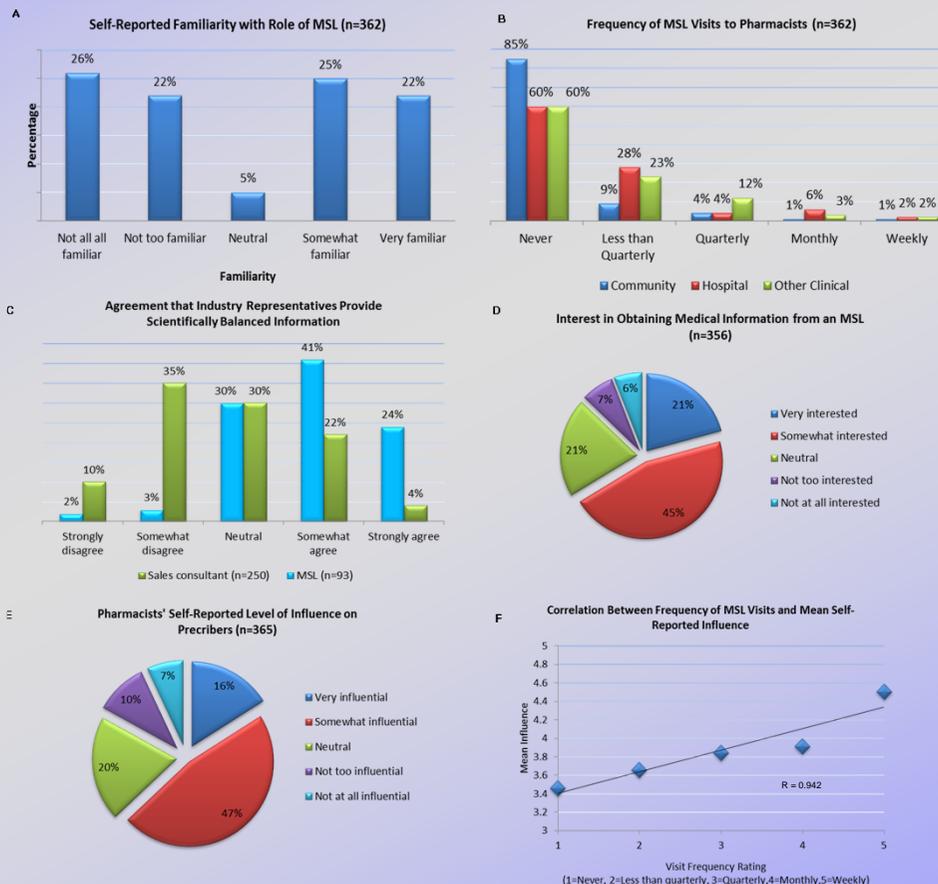
Methods

- A 27-question voluntary, web-based (using Qualtrics®), and anonymous survey was e-mailed to 6,064 members of the American Pharmacists Association (APhA) as well as non-members in early January 2013
- The survey was fielded for two weeks with weekly reminder e-mails
- A 5-point Likert scale was used for value assessment
- Statistical analyses and graphics were created using Microsoft Excel 2007

Results

- There were 389 total responses received (6% response rate)
- Geographically, there was representation from the US south (33%), midwest (28%), northeast (19%), west (17%), and Puerto Rico/non-U.S. (2%)
- With regard to the setting of their primary practice, respondents identified themselves as:
 - Community (40%)
 - Hospital (14%)
 - Other Clinical (11%)
 - Other (35%)

Results (continued)



Results (continued)

- A strong preference was seen for obtaining drug information from a medical professional (79%) vs. a sales professional (1%); 20% showed no preference
- 86% of respondents indicated they would likely initiate and/or modify drug therapy if a law permitted them. Reimbursement was the most common concern among those who were not likely to alter therapy
- Respondents showed interest in pharmaceutical industry-sponsored activities: advisory boards (55%), research (40%), and speaker engagements (55%)
- Most respondents (73%) showed an interest in attending more drug-related conferences, symposia, and/or seminars

Discussion

- The practice of pharmacy is dynamic and evolving with regard to expanded roles for pharmacists and yet pharmacists continue to be a relatively minor focus of the industry when compared to other healthcare professionals. In addition, their current sources of face-to-face drug information may not be perceived as scientifically balanced. Pharmacists are also important members of the healthcare team and there happens to be a strong correlation between MSL visitation frequency and self-reported influence on physicians with regards to choosing an appropriate pharmacotherapy regimen. With time, we only anticipate this influence to grow, which will presumably lead to greater informational needs. MSLs may be well-suited to address these needs and other, especially given pharmacists' willingness to interact with them.
- **Limitations:** General limitations of survey data and correlative associations apply. Additionally, self-reported influence may or may not translate to actual influence over prescribers. This study is also limited in that a fair amount of respondents are in a non-clinical role and that a majority have not interacted with MSLs.

Conclusions

- Pharmacists show a moderate level of awareness of the role MSLs despite infrequent visits
- Pharmacists are influential members of the healthcare team
- Pharmacists prefer receiving medical information from MSLs over sales professionals
- Pharmacists are willing to interact with MSLs and which may suggest an opportunity to gather more data on this topic

References

Murawski M, Villa KR, Dole EJ, et al. *Am J Health-Syst Pharm.* 2011 Dec;68(24):2341-50.

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