

Student and Alumni Attitudes Regarding Nutrition Education within the Pharmacy Curriculum

Ashley Ward, David Fett, Steven Caproni, Justin B. R. Lim, Alexander K. Lo, Pharm.D. Candidates 2017, Donna M. Feudo, B.S.Pharm., RPh., Michael Toscani, PharmD
Ernest Mario School of Pharmacy, Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey

Background

- Treatment of chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, cancer and hypercholesterolemia is responsible for 86% of US healthcare spending¹
- A common non-pharmacological therapy universal to the prevention and treatment of these diseases is nutritional intervention
- Pharmacists are the most accessible healthcare professionals, perfectly positioned to deliver nutritional counseling to the 250 million Americans that walk into a pharmacy every week^{2,3}
- Pharmacist-driven interventions (including behavior modification, DASH diet, lifestyle changes, etc.) have improved patient outcomes in chronic conditions including hypertension, diabetes and obesity^{4,5,6}
- Pharmacists' expanding role in nutritional counseling is evidenced by development of APhA certifications in:
 - Diabetes care
 - Medication therapy management
 - Cardiovascular disease risk management
 - Immunization⁷
- Many healthcare providers, including pharmacists, are not adequately educated to meet this demand, leaving room for improvement in nutrition training and education²

Objective

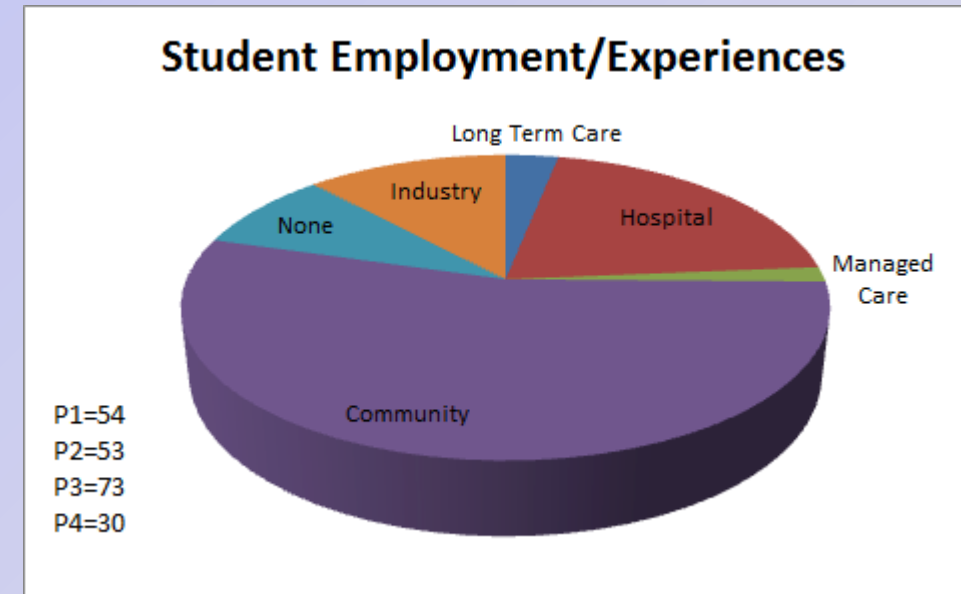
- To assess pharmacy student and recent alumni attitudes regarding nutrition education in the Rutgers PharmD curriculum and to evaluate opinions regarding the importance of nutritional education to a pharmacist's daily practice

Methods

- This study was approved by the Rutgers IRB
- An anonymous survey was sent to Rutgers Ernest Mario School of Pharmacy (EMSOP) students in years one through four as well as alumni from the Class of 2015
 - Survey window was Jan 25, 2016 to Feb 18, 2016
 - Used the Qualtrics survey program
 - Surveys were distributed via email with an individualized link to current students' school address and alumni's personal address
- Survey questions assessed:
 - Professional year or graduation year
 - Previous nutrition education
 - Current practice site
 - Post-graduate training/certifications
 - Adequacy of nutrition education within EMSOP curriculum
 - Relevance of nutrition education to pharmacy practice
 - Necessary certifications/experience to teach an elective in nutrition
 - Preferred learning method to receive nutrition education
 - Topics that should be covered in a nutrition elective
 - Interest in taking a patient-centered nutrition course if such a course was offered

Results

Fig. 1.1



Figures 1.1 & 1.2 - "community" includes chain retailers (CVS, Walgreens), grocery stores (Shop Rite, Stop & Shop, etc), mass merchants (Costco, Wal-Mart etc) and independent pharmacies

Fig. 1.2

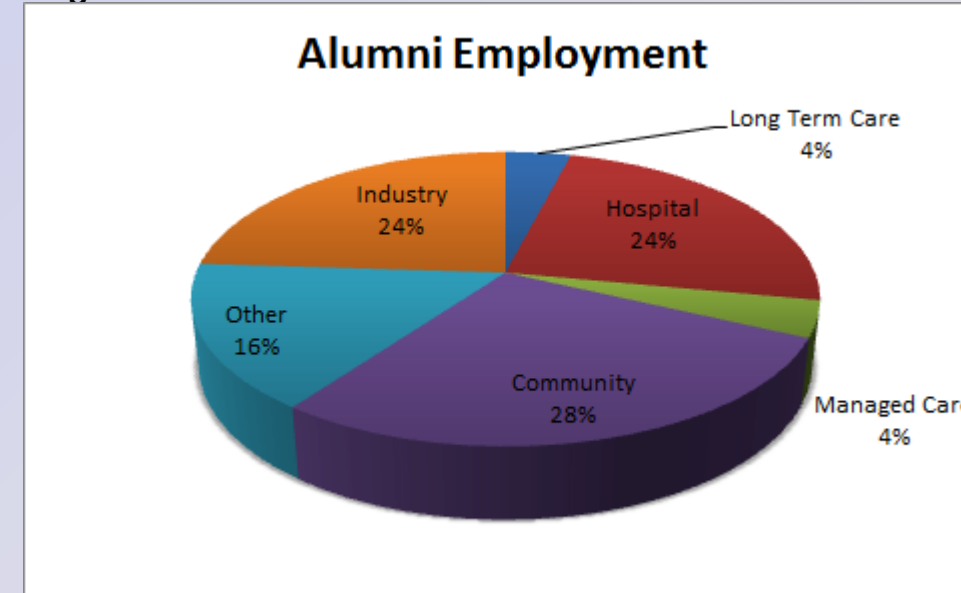


Fig. 3.1

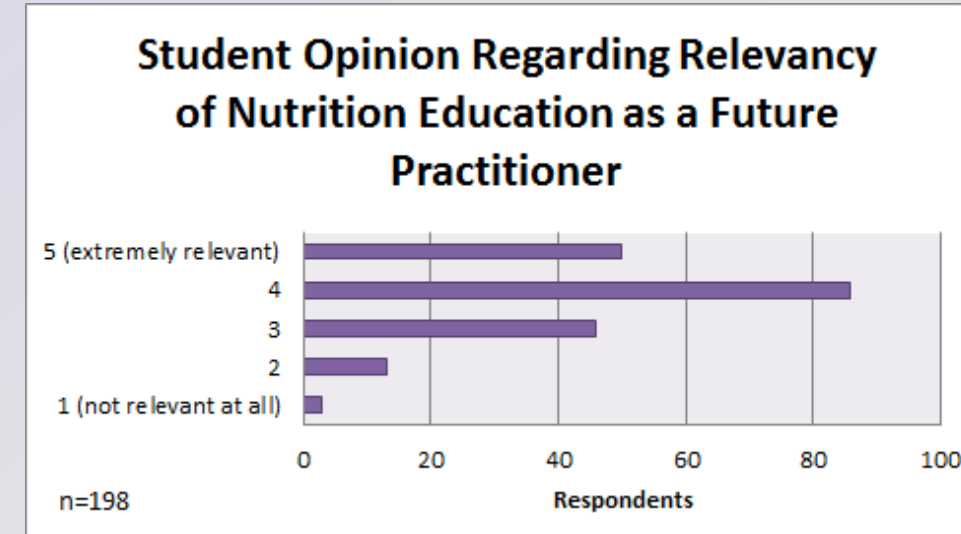


Fig. 3.1 - 38% of students working in grocery store community settings assigned relevance of nutrition the highest ranking (5) compared to 24% of their peers.

Fig. 4

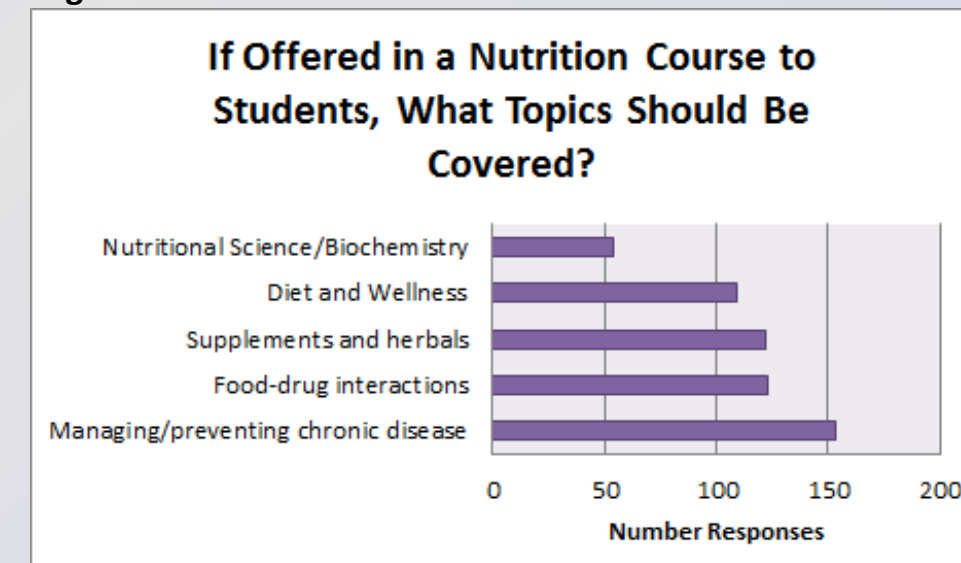


Fig.4 & 5 - Students were asked to select their top three from a list of five topics that should be included in a patient-centered nutrition course if offered.

Fig. 2.1

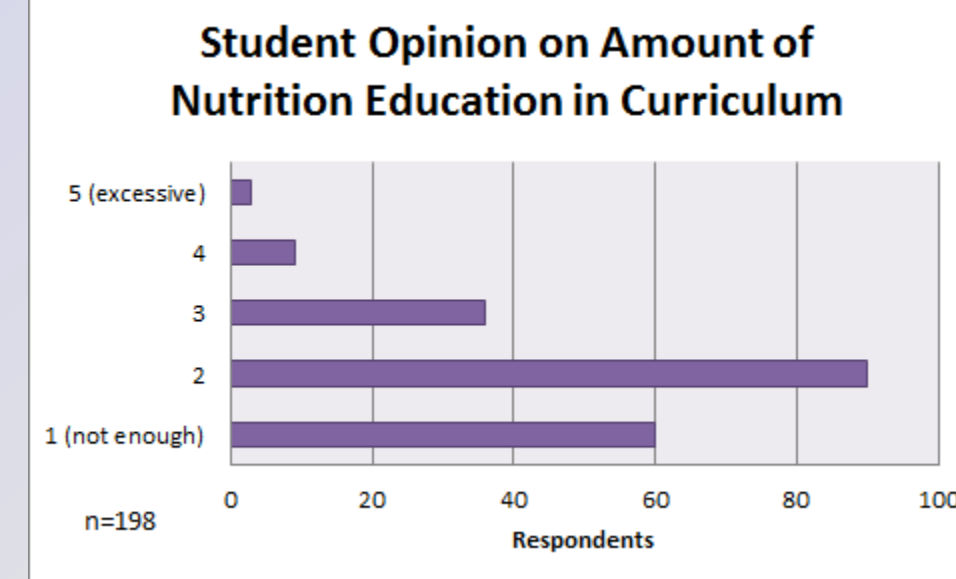


Figure 2.1 - Students with experience in mass-merchant and independent pharmacies were most likely to report that there is "not enough" education in the curriculum

Fig. 2.2

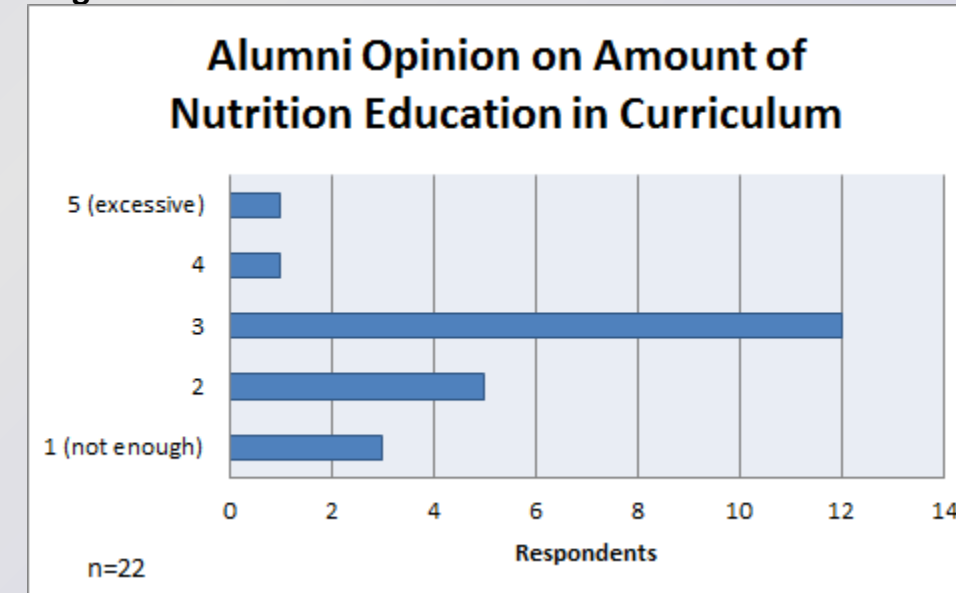


Fig. 3.2

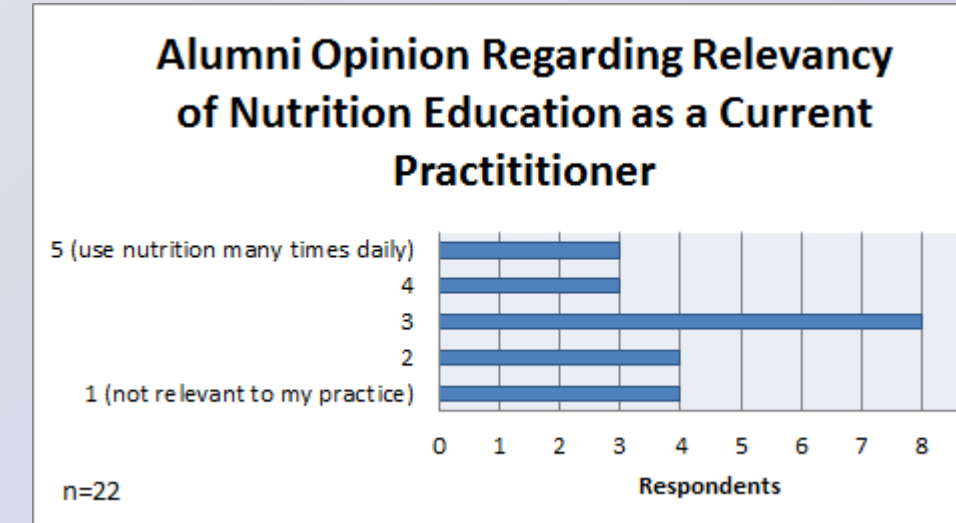
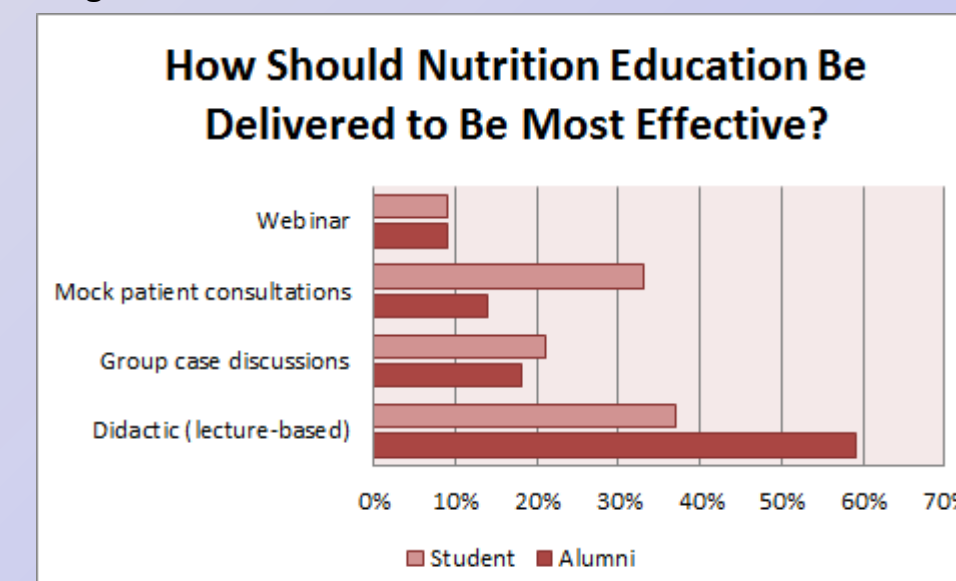


Fig. 3.2 - Alumni that work in industry, long term care or are unemployed recorded no response higher than a 3 (N = 8)

Fig. 5



Discussion

- 22% student survey response rate, n=188
- 14% alumni survey response rate, n=22
- Current students and alumni lack nutrition education
 - 86% of students had not taken an elective in nutrition within the EMSOP curriculum
 - 96% of students had not taken a college nutrition course outside of the EMSOP curriculum
 - 73% of alumni did not take a nutrition elective during their time at Rutgers
- Student interest in nutrition education is high
 - 86% of EMSOP students reported they would be interested in taking a patient-centered nutrition course if offered
 - Most students responded that the amount of nutrition education was not adequate
 - Most students view nutrition education as relevant to pharmacy practice
- Alumni opinions were split in regards to the relevance of nutrition education in pharmacy practice
 - Slightly more than not, alumni felt that EMSOP nutrition education was not sufficient
- These results strongly contrast Big 10 deans' perception of student interests
 - 50% of the Deans of Assessment of Big 10 pharmacy schools reported student interest to be "very low" in a previous survey⁸

Limitations

- Limitations include small sample size in alumni study, inability to contact alumni beyond the class of 2015, and incomplete responses in both studies

Conclusions

- Students have a strong interest in additional nutrition education
- Student interest in nutrition education at EMSOP appears greater than that observed in a recently reported survey of Big Ten Deans of Assessment
- The results of this study suggest that steps should be taken to increase the amount of nutrition education in pharmacy curricula
- Further research is needed to evaluate alumni perspective on the utility of nutrition education in the practice of pharmacy

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