

Background

Over the past century, pharmacy as a profession has transformed from a corner store druggist to a doctorate degree, now with four years of graduate professional education.¹ Pharmacists today are trained on topics including patient counseling, disease state education, drug utilization review, immunization administration, and basic physical examinations (this includes, but is not limited to, services such as blood pressure screenings, smoking cessation counseling, and diabetes education).² The training is now more clinical, with requiring evaluation of lab values, verifying of physician orders, utilizing proper dosing for an indication, and monitoring for side effects and interactions.

Healthcare is largely dictated by the legal system, being governed by both state and federal legislature. It can take time for legislation to reflect necessary changes so professionals can implement their scope of practice. This is where advocacy becomes an integral element in the progression of a profession in healthcare.

To begin advocating, a person must be knowledgeable and aware of the political landscape in which they are asking for change. They must understand the specifics and status of the bill at hand in the state or nationally. Only from there can lobbying be effective, and advocacy can lead to the proper grassroots initiatives to cause actual legislative change.

H.R. 4190 is the current federal Provider Status bill for Pharmacists. As the American Pharmacists Association has phrased it "On March 11, 2014, H.R. 4190 was introduced in the House of Representatives by Congressmen Brett Guthrie (R-KY), G.K. Butterfield (D-NC), and Todd Young (R-IN). H.R. 4190 amends Title XVIII of the Social Security Act to enable patient access to, and coverage for, Medicare Part B services by state-licensed pharmacists in medically underserved communities"³

Objective

As this bill is imperative to the evolving pharmacy practice, this study hopes to address the possible lack of awareness of this important legislation among student pharmacists and the barriers preventing more engagement in advocacy by pharmacy students. This research project will offer descriptive analysis on a survey given to student pharmacists about the knowledge gained from an educational poster on H.R. 4190 and their perceptions about the barriers of additional engagement.

Methods

This study analyzed the awareness raised from a poster session done in the "Rx Lounge" at the School of Pharmacy at Rutgers University from September 23rd to November 15th. This study focused on H.R. 4190, and the respective educational poster used to increase student knowledge on the issue. The takeaway points from the educational poster were:

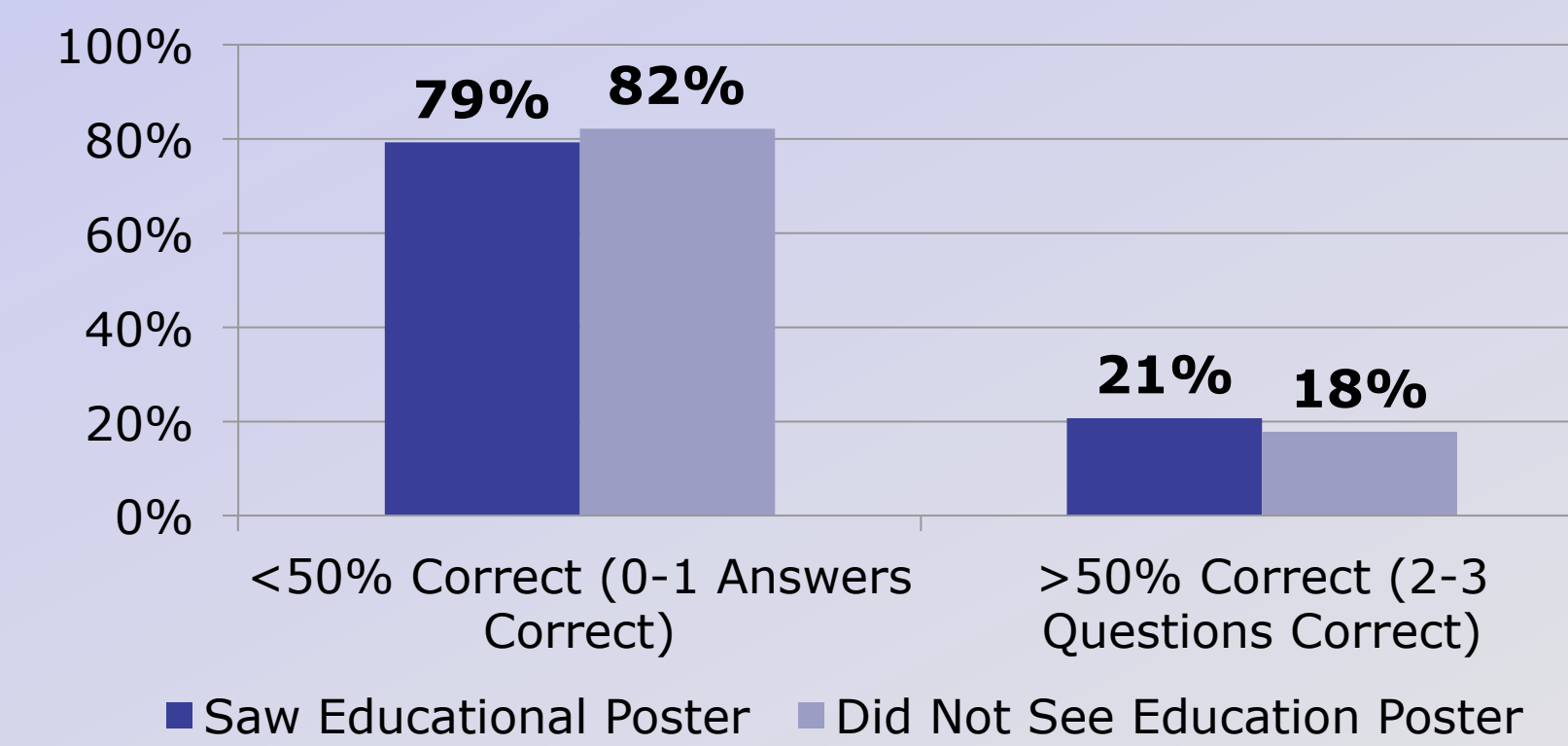
- Bill Number H.R. 4190 is the federal legislation proposal for Pharmacist Provider Status
- The legislation would enable pharmacists to bill for reimbursements for provided services to Medicare Part B beneficiaries
- The covered services will be reimbursed only if the pharmacist is servicing medically underserved communities
- Billable services are governed by state scope of practice⁴

The project was reviewed and approved by Rutgers' IRB. Data was collected from those who had and had not seen the poster. This offered a comparison between student pharmacists who did receive educational insight from the poster, and those who did not.

Results

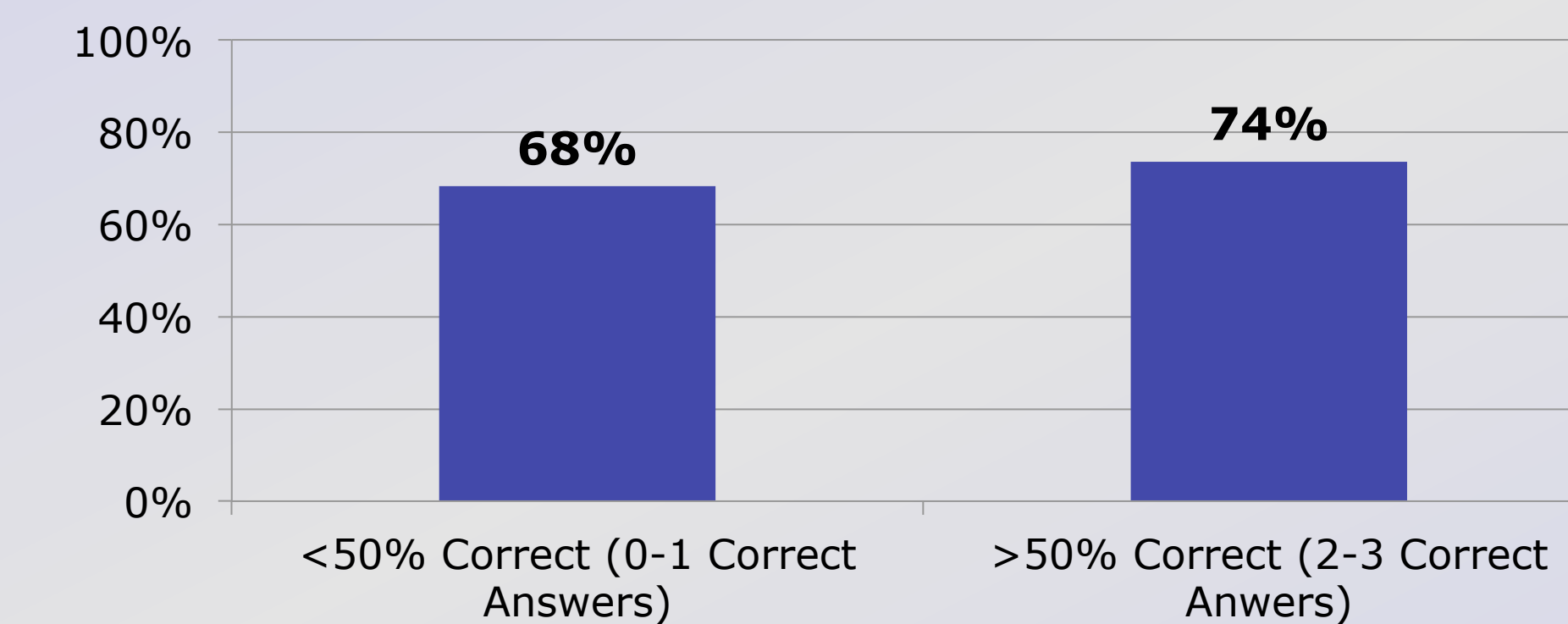
- The survey was distributed to 842 students in the professional school of pharmacy
 - Total of 98 survey responses were collected, resulting in 53 subjects (54%) who saw the educational poster and 45 subjects (46%) who did not
 - It is important to note that the same student may have taken the survey once prior to seeing the educational poster and then again after having seen the poster
 - Each answered questions with the answer choices: "True/Yes", "False/No" or "I don't know"

Figure 1. Percentage of Students and Total Correct Answers



- As seen to the left in Figure 1, for those subjects who saw the educational poster on H.R. 4190, the total correct answers were similar between the two groups
 - For those who saw the educational poster, 79% answered less than half of the survey questions correctly and 21% answered more than half of the survey question correctly
 - Alternatively, for those subjects who did not see the educational poster on HR 4190, 82% answered less than half of the survey questions correctly and 18% answered greater than half of the survey questions correctly
 - For a further breakdown of correct answers, please refer to Table 1.

Figure 2. Percentage of Students Willing to Contact Their Legislators



- Figure 2: Those who answered over half of the questions correctly (74%) were more willing to contact their legislator than those who could not answer half of the questions correctly (68%)
- Figure 3: Those who saw the educational poster answered more willing to contact their legislator (89%) than those who did not see the poster (47%).

Figure 3. Percentage of Students Willing to Contact Their Legislators

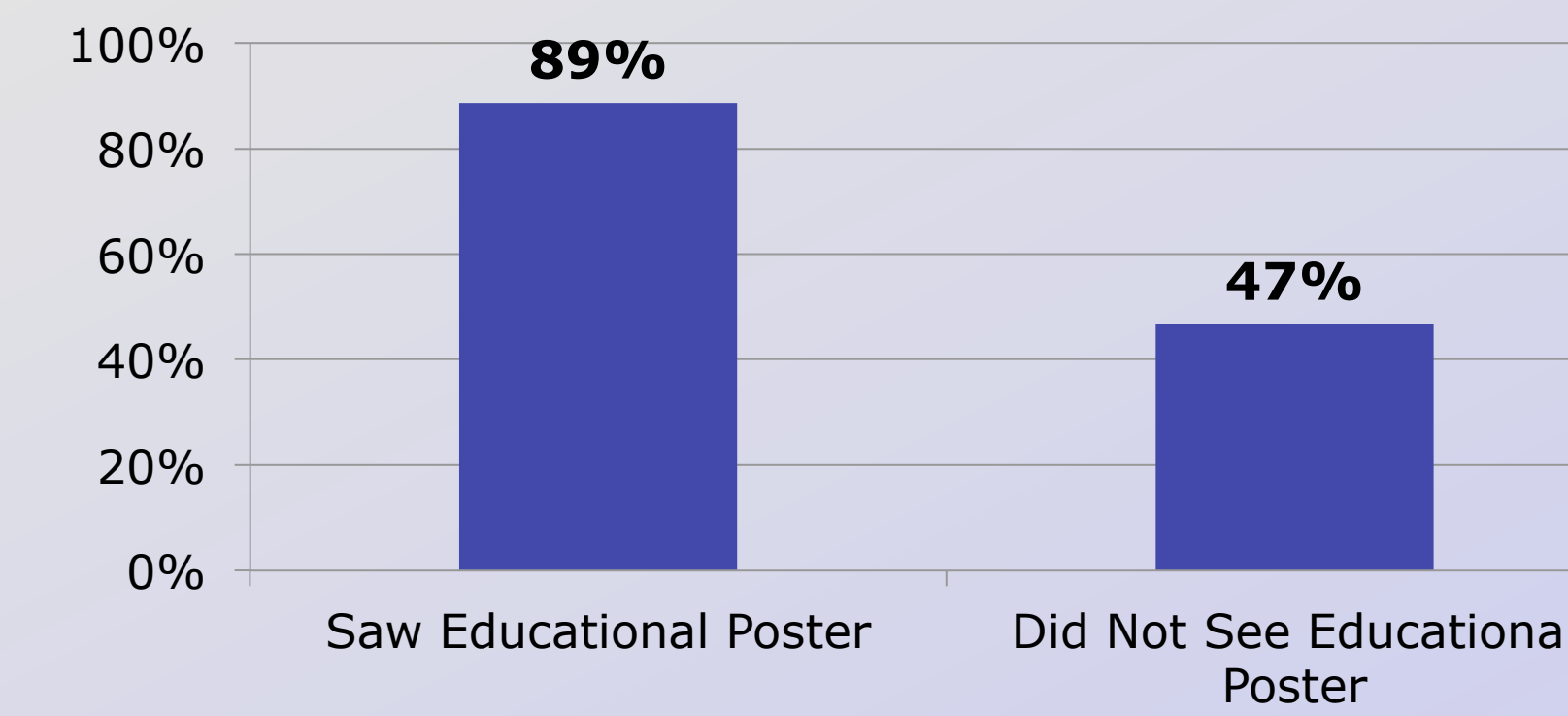


Table 1. Comprehensive Data Comparing Those Who Did and Did Not See the Educational Poster

	Saw Educational Poster		Did Not See Educational Poster	
	<50% Correct	>50% Correct	<50% Correct	>50% Correct
Student Responders	42 (79%)	11 (21%)	37 (82%)	8 (18%)
Those Willing to Contact Legislator	40 (95%)	7 (64%)	14 (38%)	7 (88%)

Methods(continued)

The survey was distributed anonymously through survey monkey to student pharmacists at Rutgers Ernest Mario School of Pharmacy. The answer choices were "True/Yes", "False/No" and, when applicable, "I don't know." The survey was advertised on Rutgers Pharmacy Facebook groups on November 5th and November 9th and open laptops at an advocacy month events at Rutgers on October 14th, 2014. The survey questions /correct answers were as follows:

1. Consent / I Agree
2. Have you seen the Provider Status Poster in the Pharmacy Lounge? / Yes or No
3. H.R. 4152 is the federal bill to recognize Pharmacists Provider Status / False
4. The national Provider Status bill would offer pharmacists' reimbursement for services based on each state's current scope of practice / True
5. A Provider Status Bill will allow reimbursement for covered services to all pharmacists nationwide / False
6. Is your Representative a cosponsor to this bill? / Yes, No, or I don't know
7. Based off of your answers to the questions on this survey, if the school drafted a letter or script, would you feel comfortable writing to or calling your state representative to urge them to cosponsor this bill? / Yes, No, or I don't know

Awareness was evaluated based on the correct answers to questions 3,4, and 5. The study also evaluated if student pharmacists answered in favor of contacting their legislator on a current pharmacy issue with increased knowledge about the issue.

Descriptive statistics will be used to summarize the data obtained from subjects. There will be no

Discussion and Conclusions

- It did not appear that the educational poster contributed to raising awareness in students as the percentages were very similar.
- The percentage of students willing to contact their legislator was slightly higher with more correct answers (74% versus 68%). Based off the data in this study, there is a potential correlation between raised awareness and a willingness to contact a legislator. A larger scale study would need to be done to show a strong correlation
- The actual experience of viewing an educational poster correlated to a higher willingness to contact a legislator (89% versus 47% as seen in Figure 3). There is a suggestive correlation that recent exposure to advocacy awareness materials leads to a higher willingness to contact a legislator, where the difference was 42% between the two groups (Figure 3). Previous knowledge/awareness of a legislative bill appears an important factor in students becoming involved. Therefore, pharmacy associations should engage and educate students about the bill prior to any "calls for action" requests
- Further research to identify other motivational factors for legislative awareness could be to evaluate any pharmacy association membership the student pharmacist may hold. This would offer further insight on association involvement and a correlation to increased awareness. An area that could be expanded on would be to evaluate if students did actually contact their legislator. There is a plan to do a follow up study that will hope to address some of these areas

References

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Disclosure: The authors have nothing to disclose