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Engagement in and perceptions of community pharmacists in the Royal Pharmaceutical Society Faculty

Focal Points:

- The Faculty is a professional recognition programme for pharmacists, initiated by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS)
- 63% were aware of the Faculty and 27% had joined, with cost being the biggest barrier to engagement
- Heightened awareness of the Faculty and the benefits it brings need to be highlighted by the RPS

Introduction:

The Faculty is a professional recognition programme for pharmacists, initiated by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS) in 2013¹. The Faculty through the use of their assessment procedures which include a portfolio review, peer assessment and expert practice assessment, aims to aid the development and learning of pharmacists. The Faculty enables pharmacists to build a portfolio of transferable knowledge and skills with mentorship opportunities to develop either as a specialist or generalist pharmacist. Due to this, the RPS released a handbook for Community Pharmacists (CPs) in August 2014 to provide them with more information about the Faculty and aid their journey². The study aimed to understand the engagement in and perceptions of CPs about the RPS and its Faculty programme.

Methods:

The present study used a survey questionnaire consisting of five sections. The sections were as follows; 8 questions on RPS membership and awareness of the Faculty, 8 questions on assessment strategies of the Faculty, 4 questions each on the Faculty handbook for CPs and the general perceptions on the Faculty and 8 demographics questions. Questions were a mixture of Likert, free text and tick box responses. The questionnaire was piloted with 5 pharmacists with data collection taking place in February and March 2015. Primarily it was distributed nationally through a major chain, but due to lack of response alternative methods were used including questionnaires being distributed in person to CPs in Croydon and Bromley (n=30) due to local geography to maximise return, or posted nationally randomly to 45 independent pharmacies in each of the North, South, East and West of England (n=180) with free post envelopes for return. Responses were then analysed using descriptive statistics. Ethical approval was obtained a Higher Education Institution Ethics committee.

Results:

A total of 152 questionnaires were received (152/210, 72%). Just over half of responders (n=82, 54%) were male and 46% (n=70) were female. Within the 152 participants, only 82 pharmacists (54%) were members of the RPS. The main reason identified for not being a member was cost (60 out of 70 pharmacists, 86%). 63% (n=95) of participants were aware of the Faculty, however only 14% (n=21) were aware of the Faculty CP handbook. From the 63% who were aware of the Faculty, 34% (n=32) were satisfied with what the Faculty offers with only 28 (29%) being aware of the RPS mentoring scheme. However, from the 28 who were aware of the mentorship scheme 21 (75%) were willing to engage with the scheme. In terms of the assessment procedures, 54% (n=51/95) were aware of the Faculty assessment procedures. Of these 51, the majority thought that they are too time consuming (88%, n=45) or difficult to follow (76%, n=39). Amongst the 95 pharmacists sampled who were aware of the Faculty, only 27% (n=26) had joined the Faculty programme with 12% (n=11) intending to do so in the future. The main reason found amongst the remaining 58/95 sampled pharmacists for

not completing a portfolio was that the Faculty requires extra fees after post nominals are awarded (80%, n=46). The main limitation for this study is a small sample size, so a larger study is required to confirm findings.

Discussion:

The present study has brought to light how engagement with the Faculty is low, with the highest barrier being cost for both membership of the RPS and the Faculty, although the response rate indicated interest in the Faculty programme. The assessment procedures of the Faculty programme are deemed to be too difficult to follow and more support is needed to complete these assessments. A heightened awareness strategy needs to be in place, explaining the benefits and the rationale of the Faculty. Pharmacists may be more willing to engage if the Faculty handbook for CPs was personally posted to them. Also, awareness of the RPS mentoring scheme to support pharmacists through their Faculty journey needs to be increased.

References:

1. Royal Pharmaceutical Society. *Faculty* <http://www.rpharms.com/development/faculty.asp> (Accessed on 22 May 2016)
2. Mills, J. Community pharmacy handbook launched by RPS Faculty. *The Pharmaceutical Journal* 2014; 293: 7822/3. <http://www.pharmaceutical-journal.com/your-rps/community-pharmacy-handbook-launched-by-rps-faculty/20065875.article> (Accessed on 22 May 2016).