
PANEL DISCUSSION:
TEACHING THE HISTORY
OF PHARMACY TODAY

Moderated by Robert A. Buerki

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The Future of the History of Pharmacy in the Professional Curriculum

John L. Colaizzi

In the ACPE Accreditation Standards and Guidelines for the professional program leading to the Doctor of Pharmacy degree (adopted June 14, 1997), standard number 11 (curricular content) includes the history of pharmacy as one of the content areas within the behavioral, social and administrative pharmacy sciences, one of five core content areas of the curriculum. The increased emphasis on pharmaceutical care as the underlying basis for pharmacy practice and for the pharmaceutical curriculum makes the teaching of the history of pharmacy within the professional program more important than ever before. A greater emphasis on the social sciences, including historical studies, as applied to professional practice, has been evident in the curricula of medical schools in recent years. In 1997, AACP's Commission to Implement Change in Pharmaceutical Education issued a position paper entitled "Maintaining Our Commitment to Change." This paper updates the earlier report of the Commission issued in 1993, "Entry-Level Curricular Outcomes, Curricular Content and Educational Process," which has been widely used as a basis for curricular reform as American schools and colleges of pharmacy transition to the Doctor of Pharmacy as the sole professional degree. This 1997 position paper was issued to ensure that the Commission's earlier recommendations remain current in light of the wrenching changes that have occurred in health care over the last five years, brought on by the escalating and pervasive impact of managed care. The 1997 position paper reorganized and broadened the educational outcomes published in the Commission's earlier paper into six

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categories. Of the six categories, two are areas that will benefit from inclusion of curricular content designated to inculcate an appreciation of the history of pharmacy among our students:

- Understanding health-care policy, organization, financing, regulation, and delivery.
- Understanding and appreciating cultural diversity.

The study of the history of pharmacy helps students to develop a framework for understanding health-care policy, organization, financing, regulation, and delivery by placing these issues into a historical context, and by noting the tensions and dynamics that have existed and evolved over a period of time between pharmacy and the prevailing health-care system and philosophy, between pharmacists and the practitioners of other professions, and between pharmacists and the public. The Commission's position paper states that "students should be able to understand systems of care including forces of change within healthcare." I believe that the study of the profession from a historical perspective definitely enhances students' understanding of the systems of care and the social, economic, legal, ethical, political, scientific, and technical forces of change within health care, and the particular place of pharmacy as related to these systems and changes.

In terms of appreciating cultural diversity, the 1997 Commission report points out that students need to develop "personal awareness and social responsibility" and "facility with ethical principles" in dealing with patients and practitioners of ethnic backgrounds differing from their own. This, too, comes from a study of the history of pharmacy as one recognizes that neither triumphs and discoveries nor errors and tragedies, have been the exclusive domain of any one ethnic or racial group throughout the history of health care.

Most students find the course in the history of pharmacy to be a refreshing respite from their technical and scientific courses, and they find it to be interesting and fun. While that might be reason enough for inclusion of such courses within the curriculum, the specific values from studying the history of pharmacy go quite beyond that.

I see the specific values from the inclusion of curricular content in the history of pharmacy within the professional curricula to be the following:

- To develop an appreciation for the concept of what a profession is and to establish the specific professional identity of the pharmacist.

- To enable the pharmacist to better deal with change in a positive manner.
- To enable pharmacists to better appreciate and deal with multiculturalism in the practice of a profession.
- To significantly assist the pharmacist to develop a strong ethical base.
- To enable the professional practitioner to come to grips with the limitations that he or she faces within a profession.

I believe that it is very helpful for teachers of history of pharmacy courses in the professional curriculum to have a strong identity with the profession. They should ideally be pharmacists who have a fairly broad base of professional pharmacy experience. This is not to say that professional historians do not have a very important role to play in the teaching of these courses. Certainly they should be the mainstay of a course that is primarily addressing the history of pharmacy as a specialty discipline, especially at the graduate level. However, within the professional curriculum, I feel that the teacher who has a strong sense of identity with the practice of the profession of pharmacy, as well as an interest and knowledge in the history of pharmacy, though not necessarily as his or her own primary discipline, can give the course the relevancy to the profession and to professional practice that will excite pharmacy students and make the course more valuable to them. The teacher needs to have a real feel for the problems that the profession faces at the present time, the trends that are shaping the profession, as well as the challenges and opportunities, and how these have changed over time and how they relate to the history of the profession. The instructor also needs to have a significant pride and sense of personal ownership in the profession to be able to teach the course from this point of view.

Although the inclusion of history as a component of another course is better than omitting it completely, I feel that a specific course dedicated to the history of pharmacy is far more effective in terms of the desired educational outcomes. I believe that students need to develop an ability to begin to actually think from a historical context, and to analyze problems within a historical framework, in order to develop an appreciation for the important applications and value of the study of the history of pharmacy to their professional identity and practice. Without taking a course specifically titled the history of pharmacy, it is less likely that this will happen.

To a significant degree, enabling the history of pharmacy to emerge as a strong component of the professional curriculum in the future will

be the responsibility of the AIHP and its members. This can be accomplished through the development of resources to assist the cadre of instructors who are not likely to be specialists in the discipline of the history of pharmacy in the teaching of the course. The development of course syllabi, of slides and videotapes, of material on the Internet, and of textbooks or chapters of textbooks, will all be important. Also, facilitating and supporting the availability of pharmaceutical or health-care historians who are, in fact, disciplinary specialists and experts in the history of pharmacy, to serve as guest lecturers and visiting faculty for the teaching of the history of pharmacy will also be helpful.

I feel that in view of the current trends and changes in the profession of pharmacy and in health care generally, the importance and value of the history of pharmacy as a content area within the professional curriculum is greater than it has ever been. The opportunities for expansion of teaching of the history of pharmacy within the professional curricula are promising in the years ahead.