

Welcome

This is the second in a series of bulletins on workforce issues produced by the Centre for Pharmacy Workforce Studies (CPWS). CPWS is the UK's leading centre of research on workforce, labour market and organisational change and development within the pharmacy profession. CPWS provides information on a broad range of workforce issues for three main groups: employers, education providers and policy makers.

The first bulletin explored family-building and the future pharmacy workforce. For further copies of the bulletin or for further details on our research, please visit our website,

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A LONGITUDINAL COHORT STUDY OF PHARMACY CAREERS

The future pharmacy workforce: Do pharmacy students want to be entrepreneurs?

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Introduction

This bulletin is based on the findings from the first wave of questionnaires in a longitudinal research study examining early career decisions of pharmacy students, along with early patterns of work and levels of job satisfaction within the 2006 pharmacy graduate cohort. A main aim of the study is to understand what factors are influential in pharmacy career choices, whether they are put into practice and how career expectations and motivations may change over time.

Pharmacy owners in the community pharmacy sector form a distinctly entrepreneurial group of practitioners with their own unique characteristics. Traditionally, it has been a male dominated area of practice with disproportionately high levels of involvement from ethnic minority (predominantly Asian) pharmacists. Research has shown that Asian pharmacy business

owners have higher than average access to financial support and business advice through familial networks and resources.

While women dominate pharmacy as a whole, men are by far the majority among owners. Pharmacy workforce data in 2005 showed that 15% of working community pharmacists were pharmacy owners of whom, 78% were male and 22% female. Indian pharmacists represent 12% of the pharmacy workforce, yet they represent over a third (35%) of all pharmacy owners. Male community pharmacists were significantly more likely to be a pharmacy owner than females (25% vs. 6%).

To explore continuity or change in relation to entrepreneurialism, this bulletin examines the characteristics of 'would-be' entrepreneurs present in the 2006 pharmacy graduate cohort.



Methods

The questionnaire was aimed at all pharmacy students in the 2006 graduate cohort across 14 schools of pharmacy in the UK. At the time of completing the survey, the cohort were coming to the end of the third year of their four-year degree programme. The questionnaire included 3 questions directly related to the theme of entrepreneurialism. The students were asked: (1) whether the prospect of owning a business was an influence on them wanting to study pharmacy; (2) how certain they were that they'd own their own business in 10 years time, and (3) the extent to which they agreed with the attitude statement, "I am keen to open my own pharmacy business".

Characteristics of the Cohort

The overall response rate was 67%. A key characteristic of the sample is that it has a high proportion of females to males with 71% female and 29% male. The largest group of respondents, proportionally, were white British (41%) and the single largest minority ethnic group were Indian British (19%).



Results

Influence of entrepreneurialism on decision to study pharmacy

Nearly 18% of the students stated the prospect of owning their own business strongly influenced their decision to choose to study pharmacy. A further 30% said that this had some influence on their decision to choose pharmacy. Considering the actual proportion of owners within the pharmacy workforce, this shows that entrepreneurial leanings remain undiminished amongst this cohort.

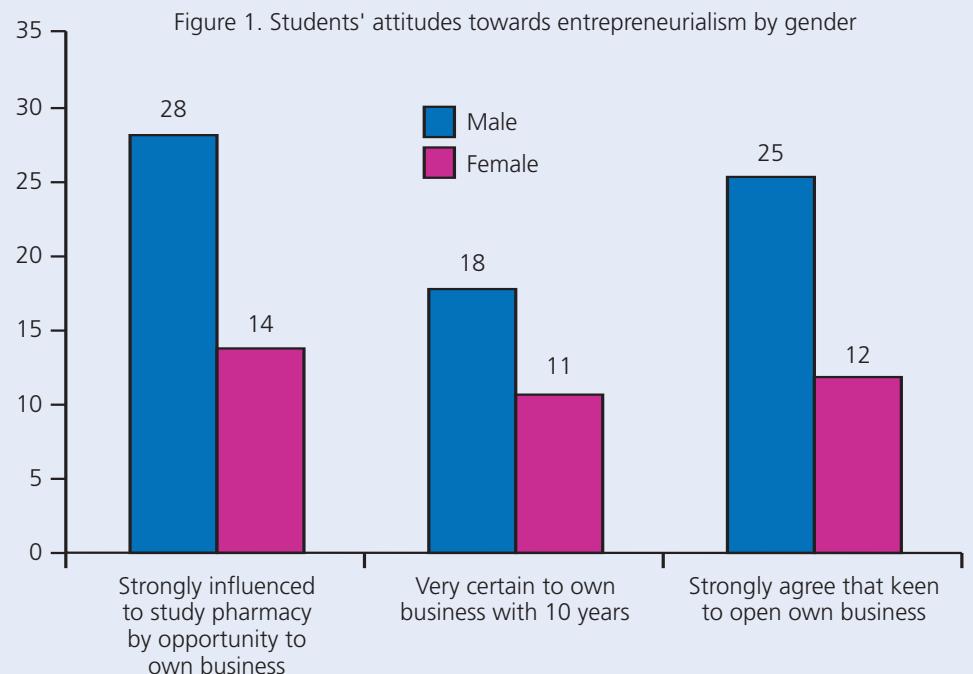
In terms of gender, the traditional patterns found in the pharmacy workforce were replicated to an extent, as proportionally more males than females (28% of males compared to 14% of females) said having their own business was a strong influence on studying pharmacy.

Certainty over entrepreneurial intentions

When asked the question about what they see as their current career choices over the next 10 years, 13% said they were 'very certain' that they would own a community pharmacy business and a further 20% said they were 'quite certain'. Therefore, a third of respondents believe they will follow an entrepreneurial career path. See figure 1 for details.

Eighteen percent of males compared with 11% of females were 'very certain' they

would own a pharmacy business. This is interesting because it suggests that a greater proportion of women are identifying an entrepreneurial career path, compared with women in the current workforce. More than two-thirds (68%) of women who were very certain they would own a pharmacy business were of non-white ethnic origin and of these, more than a third (35%) were of Indian British origin.



Keen to own business

Students were asked to what extent they agreed with the statement "I am keen to open my own pharmacy business." Sixteen percent of students in the cohort strongly agreed with the statement. Male students were more likely to strongly agree with the statement than female students (25% vs. 12%).



Consistency of entrepreneurial intentions

Students' entrepreneurial intentions appear relatively consistent. A significant proportion (61%) of those who reported that the prospect of owning a pharmacy business strongly influenced their initial choice of pharmacy as a degree were very certain that they would own a community pharmacy within ten years and a similar proportion (62%) strongly agreed that they would be keen to own their own pharmacy business. So it appears that those initial intentions were, for the majority of students, still in place at the time of completing the questionnaire.

It is interesting to note that for most of the ethnic groups entrepreneurial intentions appear fairly consistent (See figure 2). There is some evidence to suggest that entrepreneurial intentions waned for students from a Pakistani British background. Almost a third of Pakistani British students cited owning a business as a strong influence on their choice of degree, compared with only 19% who were very certain they would own a business within 10 years and just 13% who strongly agreed that they were keen to open their own business.

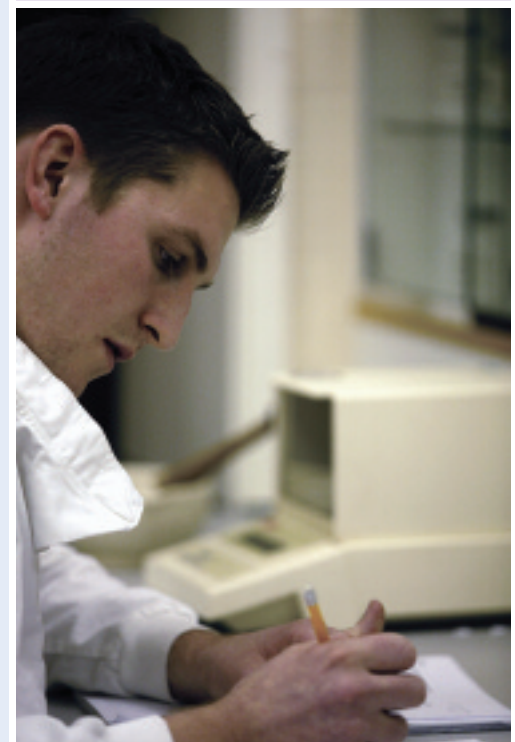
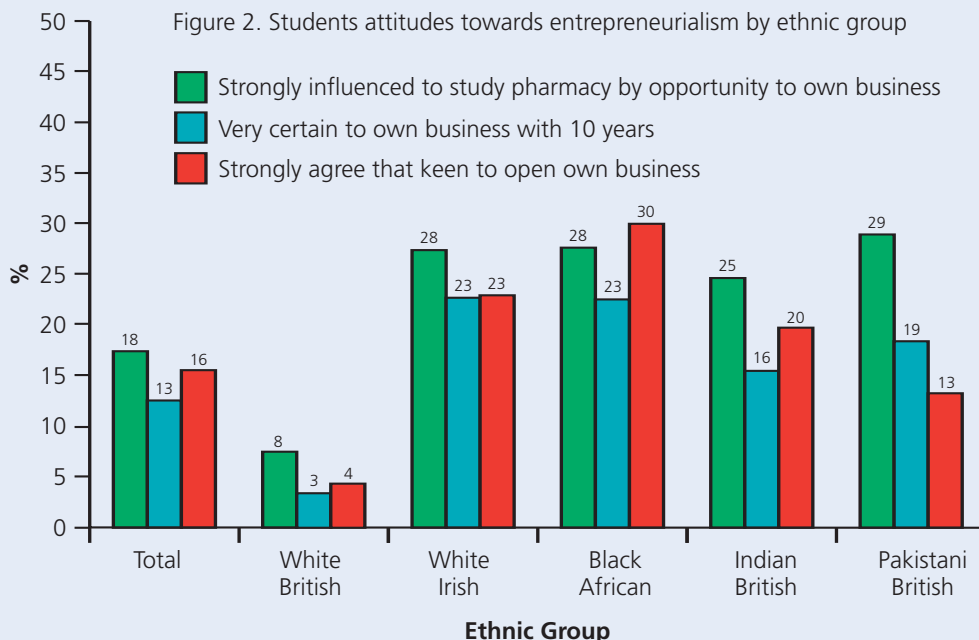
Relationship between ethnic origin and entrepreneurial intentions

The findings of this study indicate a relationship between ethnic origin and entrepreneurial intentions. Figure 2 shows students' attitudes towards the three variables relating to entrepreneurialism. Only sub groups with a sample size >50 are shown.

Students from British Pakistani and Black African backgrounds were most likely to be strongly influenced to choose a pharmacy degree by the opportunity of owning a business. White Irish and Black African students were more likely to be very certain of owning a pharmacy business than students in other ethnic groups and to strongly agree that they would be keen to open their own business (See figure 2). White British students were consistently less likely to be influenced by entrepreneurial

opportunities or to express a desire to own their own business, when compared with other ethnic groups. This is likely to be because females are by far the majority (77%) among the White British students.

The results also indicate a relationship between entrepreneurial intentions, gender and ethnic origin. With the exception of the Black African group, male pharmacy students in all the sub groups shown in figure 2 were more likely to be strongly influenced by the prospect of owning a business, to be very certain of opening a business within 10 years and to strongly agree that they were keen to open a business than their female counterparts. Female Black African students were more likely to be influenced by entrepreneurial factors than their male peers.



Family connections

Previous research has indicated that pharmacists who want an entrepreneurial career are more likely to have a pharmacist in the family. In this study, 30% of respondents had a pharmacist in the family. Indian British students were most likely to have a pharmacist in the family, with 55% reporting at least one pharmacist among family members.

Students with a pharmacist in the family were significantly more likely to have been influenced by entrepreneurialism in their choice of degree (27% vs. 14%), to be certain that they would own a pharmacy business (23% vs. 8%) and to agree that they were keen to own their own business (25% vs. 11%). This suggests that having a pharmacist as a family member may foster entrepreneurial attitudes.



Summary

Entrepreneurial intentions are relatively high amongst this cohort. The traditional pattern of male dominance among owners is replicated to an extent but the proportion of females who intend to become pharmacy owners is higher than the proportion of actual female owners in the pharmacy workforce. This may suggest that owning a pharmacy is seen as a growing possibility for female pharmacy students in the context of an increasingly feminised workforce. Cultural factors may be a key influence in terms of which female students plan on becoming pharmacy owners.

There is a strong link with the prospect of owning a pharmacy as a reason for choosing pharmacy as a degree and career intentions after three years of study. This suggests that the majority of 'would-be' entrepreneurs are not losing their convictions as they progress through their degrees.

The findings demonstrate continuity with findings from previous research with certain ethnic groups showing a stronger propensity for an entrepreneurial career. Evidence is presented to confirm that having members of extended family networks involved in the profession may foster entrepreneurial attitudes.

A new finding in light of these data is the high proportions of 'White Irish' students who intend to become pharmacy owners. This may be due to high numbers of small independent rural pharmacies in Northern Ireland and Ireland, (where many of these respondents intend to practice). This may appear to be a 'new' finding because those who practice in Ireland are not covered in the recent GB pharmacy workforce censuses.

It must be taken into consideration that the findings presented here are concerned with career intentions. Many of these intentions may not come to fruition when the practical realities of opening a pharmacy are encountered. This may be particularly relevant given the steady decline of independent pharmacies through competition from the multiples over recent years and an economic climate that is not favourable to small pharmacy businesses. It will be of particular interest to follow these respondents over the next few years and establish whether their intentions are put into practice, and whether those who do not fulfill these early entrepreneurial intentions remain satisfied in whatever alternative they choose.