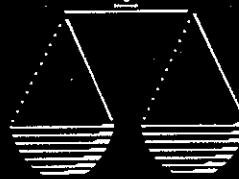




# Legal Aspects of Pharmacy Practice®



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## The Case for Pharmacy Law as a Career

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In the winter of 1984, as part of a senior project in pharmacy administration, we conducted a study of pharmacist-lawyers to update a similar study by Fink ten years earlier.<sup>1</sup> State pharmacy associations and boards of pharmacy and law and pharmacy schools were asked to identify presumed pharmacist-lawyers or pharmacy law students. Questionnaires then were sent to each of the 495 names we received. Fifteen were undeliverable, and 273 responses were received—a response rate of 57%. However, two questionnaires were not usable. In comparison, Fink sent questionnaires to 216 presumed pharmacist-lawyers and received 134 responses; so it

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would seem that the number of these professionals has more than doubled in ten years. A breakdown of our respondents by age, sex, and career is presented in *Table I*.

Our most positive finding was that the overwhelming majority (76%) of the respondents indicated they would choose to major in pharmacy if they had that choice to make again. The younger the respondents, the more likely they were to indicate a preference for pharmacy as an undergraduate major. It also is encouraging that only 17% of the respondents said that a negative perception of pharmacy motivated them to pursue a career in law; 24% said they were influenced by a positive perception of law; 47% by personal goals, such as advancement or money; and 12%, by other factors.

On the negative side, only 41% of respondents indicated that they consider job prospects for future pharmacist-

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**Table I**  
**Age, Sex, and Current or Anticipated Career of Respondents**

Age	Sex		Career							
	M	F	Pharmacist	Lawyer	Association	Industry	Government	Teaching Pharmacy	Law	Other
0-24	8	0	3	28	0	5	2	2	0	3
25-29	23	12								
30-34	29	9	13	77	1	4	4	4	0	5
35-39	68	2								
40-44	47	4	3	46	0	7	8	3	1	10
45-49	26	1								
50-54	20	0	2	20	1	6	4	2	0	7
55-59	12	0								
over 60	10	0								
	243	28	21	171	2	22	18	11	1	25

**Table II**  
**What is the Value of Pharmacy Education to the Study and Practice of Law?**

	Study of Law	Practice of Law
Much more beneficial than detrimental	70 (26%)	112 (41%)
Somewhat more beneficial than detrimental	42 (15%)	62 (23%)
Equally beneficial and detrimental	74 (27%)	39 (14%)
Somewhat more detrimental than beneficial	63 (23%)	14 (5%)
Much more detrimental than beneficial	14 (5%)	2 (1%)
No Response	8 (3%)	42 (15%)
	271 (100%)	271 (100%)

**Table III**  
**What Areas of Pharmacy Education Will Help Prepare Students for the Study and Practice of Law?**

	For Study of Law	For Practice of Law
Writing skills	183 (32%)	142 (28%)
Problem solving	91 (10%)	71 (14%)
Reading	78 (14%)	55 (11%)
Communication skills	134 (23%)	125 (24%)
Business courses	47 (8%)	54 (11%)
No modification of courses	30 (5%)	31 (6%)
No response	9 (2%)	31 (6%)
	572	511

lawyers to be "good;" 45% said job prospects are "moderate," and 14%, "poor." This pessimism about employment opportunities undoubtedly reflects the oversupply of lawyers in general, and it indicates that holding degrees in both law and pharmacy is not a guarantee of employability.

One of our primary concerns was that the undergraduate disciplines that traditionally have prepared students for the study of law may not be emphasized in pharmacy schools.<sup>2</sup> However, the use of "tracking" may enable pharmacy students to take elective courses that serve as the basis for the study of law. To test this hypothesis, our survey asked whether traditional pharmacy education is detrimental or beneficial to the study and practice of law. As Table II indicates, only 41% said pharmacy education is much or somewhat more beneficial than detrimental to the study of law, although 64% gave that response with regard to the practice of law. This response would indicate that while a pharmacy education may be a good background for the practice of law, it might not be as good a preparation for law school. In answer to a question regarding the elective courses that would help prepare a pharmacy student for the study and practice of law, the respondents mentioned writing and communication skills most frequently (Table III).

We feel that our study shows a career in law to be a viable option for people with a background in pharmacy. The number of pharmacist-lawyers is increasing, and although job prospects are only moderate, superior performance in law school can improve them. Undergraduate courses that emphasize writing and communication skills may make the transition from pharmacy to law school easier. □

**References**

1. Fink JL III: Pharmacist-lawyers. *J Am Pharm Assoc* 1974;NS14:565.
2. Fink JL III: Law school for pharmacists? *Am Pharm* 1981;NS21:492.