

# Creating International Opportunities in the Classroom

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** To address the need for students to develop a professional/practice vision with a global perspective, faculty at the University of Minnesota College of Pharmacy designed a course to introduce students to pharmacy practice in a variety of countries. The aim of this paper is to share with other pharmacy educators how to structure a course that teaches students how to develop a global perspective on healthcare, how to articulate that perspective, and how to begin to practice with a global conscience.

**Course Description:** The International Pharmacy Practice and Leadership Directed Studies course engaged students in self-discovery and reflection through a combination of structured and unstructured experiences taking place in various learning environments, including interactions with pharmacists from a variety of countries through online Skype discussions.

**Evaluation:** Students reported a variety of realizations in weekly journal entries and in a final presentation about their professional/practice vision.

**Future plans:** The course will evolve to include presentations by more international healthcare practitioners in addition to pharmacists, including nurses, physicians, and administrators.

**Keywords:** *Global Classroom, International Practice, Leadership, Vision, Pharmacy Students*

## Introduction

As urgent public health issues arise worldwide, leadership skills and a global perspective are essential for today's healthcare students and professionals. It is especially important for healthcare students and professionals in developed nations to consider the public health issues of the developing world.

In addition, for healthcare students and professionals to effectively act to address public health crises, they must have the opportunity to develop and refine their leadership skills, especially their professional/practice vision. A professional/practice vision guides one toward the future, toward the image of a seemingly impossible goal (White, 2009). For the purposes of this course, a professional/practice vision is the way in which each student sees herself/himself working in the future and making a difference in the pharmacy profession. The professional/practice vision is called such because it is important for the student to develop a vision of pharmacy that will apply to their future work, whether they are practicing directly with patients, or working in the profession in another capacity, such as in education or pharmaceuticals. One student's final professional/practice vision stated: "*I envision a future where a patient from one side of the world can visit a pharmacy on the other side and receive the same quality of service and information if not better*".

A variety of globally focused activities for healthcare students have been reported in the literature. A cross-culture paediatric emergency medicine course instructed students in health care systems, disease management, and how culture, social factors, and religious beliefs impacted the care of patients (Valani *et al.*, 2011). Additionally, medical students reported that an international health fellowship program changed how they practiced medicine in the U.S. due to "changes in world views; increased cultural sensitivity; enhanced community, social, and public health awareness; enhanced clinical and communication skills; more appropriate resource utilization; changes in career plans; and a greater understanding of the challenges of working in areas with scarce resources" (Haq *et al.*, 2000).

Globally focused experiences for healthcare students have also included a variety of internet-based learning activities. An internationally-focused nursing leadership program incorporated not only travel to other countries, but also web-based learning opportunities (Garner *et al.*, 2009). Another nursing program exposed students to a global perspective on the delivery of healthcare by using web-based video conferencing with students from another country (Daley *et al.*, 2008).

Finally, the importance of a professional/practice vision for healthcare students has been reported in the literature. A

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leadership program at the School of Nursing at Edith Cowan University incorporated the development of a professional vision as well as other various leadership skills (Hendricks *et al.*, 2010). Other literature has focused on the importance of professional vision for students and healthcare providers in accomplishing goals, development of professional identity, and personal and professional growth (Lindquist *et al.*, 2006; Levin, 2003; Opena, 1996).

To address the need for students to develop a professional/practice vision with a global perspective, faculty at the University of Minnesota College of Pharmacy designed a course to introduce students to pharmacy practice in a variety of countries. The International Pharmacy Practice and Leadership Directed Studies course was intended to broaden the perspective of pharmacy practice students to a global level while helping them develop a strong professional/practice vision.

The aim of this paper is to share with other pharmacy educators how to structure a course that teaches students how to develop a global perspective on healthcare, how to articulate that perspective, and how to begin to practice with a global conscience. The international opportunity of a course such as this creates value by opening the students' (and educators') perspectives of pharmacy to a global level. The course offers a diverse perspective of practice across the world, including effective and ineffective ways that the profession functions. The course also provides an understanding of first hand cultural differences as students learn directly from those pharmacists practicing in the field.

### Description of Course

The International Pharmacy Practice and Leadership Directed Studies course aimed to achieve three specific outcomes:

- Provide the student with an International perspective and appreciation for the diversity of pharmacy throughout the world;
- Encourage the student to incorporate positive aspects of global practice into their professional/practice vision;
- Develop in the student an open-mindedness to other ways of thinking and acting.

The course engaged students in self-discovery and reflection through a combination of structured and unstructured experiences taking place in various learning environments, including interactions with pharmacists from a variety of countries through online Skype discussions.

Class structure was designed as a six-week, two-hour class. It was taught on two campuses; the interactive television system (ITV) connected students from both campuses while simultaneously electronically connecting the practitioner(s). The first hour was devoted to correspondence with an international pharmacist. After disconnecting with the pharmacist, faculty conducted a discussion during the second hour. Students received one credit for their efforts.

In Spring 2012, sixteen students enrolled in the course: twelve from the Duluth campus, and four from the Twin Cities campus. In Spring 2013, 22 students enrolled in the

course: eight from the Duluth campus, and fourteen from the Twin Cities campus.

The course began with participants documenting their professional/practice vision, based on a self-guided journal reflection. Students spent time in class discussing what a vision is and answering questions on a worksheet that helped to guide the development of their visions and perspectives. This exercise was intended to help students frame their personal leadership perspectives; the exercise was also intended as a guide for the journal reflections throughout the course.

International pharmacists presented in the class either electronically or in-person. In Spring 2012 six countries were represented: Germany, Serbia, Kenya, Taiwan, Brazil, and Tanzania. In Spring 2013 six countries were represented: The Netherlands, Portugal, Taiwan, Australian, Finland, and Brazil. Every country was represented electronically via Skype, except for Taiwan and Brazil, which were represented in-person on campus, in a panel/group format. Countries were selected with the guidance of former International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) president, Lowell Anderson. The countries were chosen specifically to create a variety of diverse practice perspectives for the students. International pharmacists were selected based on pre-existing relationships with the University of Minnesota and their expertise in international pharmacy. Several pharmacists have roles as preceptors or adjunct positions with the university, one was selected due to his role in developing the "Good Pharmacy Practice" discussed during the class, and others have prominent roles in the International Pharmacy Federation (FIP).

Suggestions from the students in 2012 were taken in consideration for demographic areas included in 2013 based on feedback from students during the final class debrief. This spectrum helped show students the diversity of pharmacy practice around the world, as well as highlight how different infrastructure, culture, history, and economic development affected healthcare and the practice of pharmacy within each nation.

Prior to their presentations, presenters were sent an email describing the one-hour Skype call. They were asked to prepare a 40-minute presentation that included photos of pharmacies and/or healthcare in their countries and addressed three key topics: 1) Pharmacy practice in their countries and how it fits into the national healthcare systems; 2) The positive outcomes they achieve in practice; 3) Obstacles they encounter to providing best health outcomes. Presenters were also advised to expect 15-20 minutes of questions from students following their presentations. These questions generally concerned education, such as how much schooling was needed to become a pharmacist in that country. Students also asked about the structure of the pharmacy, specifically the ratio of pharmacists to pharmacy technicians and the roles of each, the salary of pharmacists in the country, and interactions with patients, including common perceptions of pharmacists by patients.

A weekly one-two page journal reflection was due to the facilitators, one week post the international presentation. It was recommended for students to complete the assignment fairly quickly after class, in order to reflect upon the specific

information provided from the speaker. The journal questions were designed for students to reflect upon what they learned from the pharmacists in varying countries and what they can apply to their own practice (Appendix A).

Students were asked to share their professional/practice vision in a creative way that incorporated their heightened global awareness. The assignment was intended to motivate students to explore how the international perspectives influence their vision in a way that can be articulated to patients and colleagues.

### Evaluation

The evaluation process for this course provides qualitative results. Evaluation of the course was conducted in three ways. The first was an overall class discussion on the final day of classes, post presentation. Faculty asked questions regarding what students believed worked well with the class, what could be improved during the class, and if there were additional demographic areas of interest. The second evaluation was through the university survey system, sent anonymously to students. These questions were more specific to the usefulness of the course and faculty involvement. The response to these online surveys was minimal (10 out of 22 in 2013), probably due to the fact that this was a one-credit course. No specific before or after attitudinal surveys were conducted, though this information emerged from the evolution of the students' professional/practice visions over the six-week period of the course.

The third method of evaluation was through analysis of the students' journal entries and the final professional/practice visions. Journal entries and professional/practice visions were analysed by one researcher. The journal entries were read through at least twice and key phrases and sections were highlighted. These sections were selected based on their relevancy to the aims of the course. Three major themes emerged from this analysis: overall global health awareness; comparing and contrasting each country's best practices to that of the United States; recognition of each country's unique characteristics and the influence on pharmacy practice.

Students reported a variety of realizations in each of the weekly journal entries. They were able to identify positive features of other countries' practice of pharmacy as well as areas that posed difficulty for the practice of pharmacy. Students also commented on similarities and differences between each country and the United States. Importantly, students were able to identify positive features and areas of difficulty for the practice of pharmacy in their own country, the United States.

At the beginning of the course, some students reported having a global component to their professional/practice vision. By the conclusion of the course, more students reported that the global perspective had an impact or was incorporated into their vision.

Many students included global leadership perspectives in their final professional/practice vision:

- "I envision a future where a patient from one side of the world can visit a pharmacy on the other side and receive the same quality of service and information if not better."
- "Overall, this experience has helped me to look at the bigger picture of pharmacy practice throughout the world and see beyond the limits of our country. It has encouraged me and allowed me to see myself leading greater changes to the profession of pharmacy in my future practice."
- "My initial vision has not changed, but I feel that I have more perspective regarding international pharmacy that affects the way I approach my vision. Specifically, I realized that to understand a different nation's practice of pharmacy means to realize that pharmacy practice is dependent on many things that are beyond my control such as: The abundance or dearth of financial resources, the status of the country (i.e. recovering from recent war, national financial crisis, geography, etc.), the type of health insurance available, the level of government involvement in the delivery of health care, how many pharmacy schools are available in the country, legal issues (i.e. what kind of products are able to be sold legally at a pharmacy), industrial age of a country which determines available space for a pharmacy, cultural attitude towards pharmaceuticals and other cultural or herbal remedies, the respective cultures' accepted level of communication between the pharmacist and the physician, and the level of taxation on citizens."

### Future Plans

After two successful semesters, the course directors believe that students would benefit from learning about the care team structures in other countries, and thus would like to grow the class to include presentations by more international healthcare practitioners in addition to pharmacists, including nurses, physicians, and administrators. There is also a growing need and a desire among pharmacy students for more study abroad opportunities, and faculty are committed to exploring options to make these prospects possible for students.

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### Appendix A

#### Journal Assignment

Journal Reflections - assignment and questions for the students: Due weekly (one week post International presentation) – these are 1-2 pages and it is recommended to complete fairly quickly after class, as you reflect upon the specific information provided from the speaker/country.

- What did you learn from (country) that you can/will apply into your practice/career?
- Now with understanding the current health deliver system (within the country), what is one thing you can take with you to create an impact?
- What is your assessment to the strengths and limitations to the pharmacy practice (within the country) we discussed?

Share your overall impressions of what you heard from the speaker.

### Appendix B

#### Professional /Practice Vision Final Project

Learning Objectives: Communicate a professional/practice vision that incorporates an international perspective.

Students will share their practice/profession vision during the last day of class. Sharing the professional/practice vision can be done in a creative way that incorporates the opportunities/barriers that may exist from a global perspective. Explore how the international perspectives may affect a vision in a way that can be articulated to patients and colleagues. This can be done with posters, videos, presentation, etc. Feel free to be creative in the vision project: visual imagery, language, colours, however you would like to present the information.

#### Criteria

- Communicate a personal pharmacy practice vision that incorporates an international perspective

- Describe your initial vision
- Share the ways in which your vision may have changed

Students will be expected to

- Share their posters during poster session scheduled in class
- Upload an image of their poster on the Moodle2 site
- Peer review the final vision presentation

#### Questions to consider

- What have you learned from the international pharmacist
- What have you appreciated from the global perspective
- In light of the course, how has the global perspective this affected your practice vision?
- How has your perspective changed now that you have the global perspective?
- What would you assume is the vision of the other countries?
- Select one country, how would the vision change if you were to practice in that country?
- What were the things that you didn't think about when you crafted your initial vision?
- What were some of the opportunities that you learned?
- What were some of the barriers?
- Key questions, what changed?
- Why did it, or didn't it change?