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IPSF collaborations with FIP and other global entities impacting pharmacy education

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Abstract

Background: Pharmacy education is essential to nurture a pharmaceutical workforce able to deliver optimum pharmaceutical care. Owing to recent challenges and advances, the scope of the pharmacy profession has changed, and the pharmacist's role has expanded. Therefore, pharmacy education should be reshaped. The International Pharmaceutical Students' Federation (IPSF) believes that the collaboration of pharmacy students with academics is fundamental to tackling challenges in education and provides development opportunities for students to improve their competencies to fit their future roles. **Objective:** This report aims to discuss the collaborations with international health organisations and entities concerned with education to better understand their impact on pharmacy education and the workforce. Hence, IPSF can re-set its strategic goals for the upcoming mandates. Archival documents were reviewed, and the main findings are described here. **Conclusion:** Impactful collaborations have been found. However, it inspires IPSF to strengthen their relations with the International Pharmaceutical Federation Academic Pharmacy Section (FIP AcPS) to improve their pharmacy education initiatives.

Introduction

The International Pharmaceutical Students' Federation (IPSF) is the leading international advocacy organisation for pharmacy and pharmaceutical science students and recent graduates. It was founded in 1949 by eight pharmacy student associations; hence, it is considered the oldest faculty-based student organisation in the world. IPSF aims to improve public health by advancing pharmacy practice and pharmaceutical sciences education. It represents around 500,000 pharmacy students from over 100 member organisations worldwide. IPSF members are either pharmacy or pharmaceutical sciences students or recent graduates up to four years after graduation from their first degree in pharmacy (IPSF, 2022b). IPSF consists of four project committees, including

pharmacy education (PE), professional development (PD), public health (PH), and students exchange programmes committee (SEP), in addition to supportive teams involving external relations (ER), internal relations (IR), media and publications committees (MnP), and finally the regional committees. All the abovementioned committees work under the executive committee, which includes the president, president-elect, secretary-general, treasurer, and chairpersons of the committees (IPSF, 2022a).

A robust policy formulation is essential for IPSF, as it is the principal representative for pharmacy and pharmaceutical science students based in diverse countries and conditions. In this regard, IPSF conducts at least two policy sessions every year with its member

organisations, one on a global scale and the other on a regional scale. The aforementioned policy sessions are conducted on vulnerable issues in modern-day pharmacy education, where inclusive insights from involved parties are generated. Hence, these insights serve as a base to draft declarations and policy statements for organisational advocacy. Specifically, the IPSF's Policy and Advocacy portfolio gets involved in this context to draft policies and advocate for them in high-level meetings. As a strategic partner of the World Health Organisation (WHO), IPSF actively participates in its meetings, including the World Health Assembly (WHA), delivering those statements (WHO, 1997; IPSF, 2018)

Changing and improving health professional education (PE) to bridge the gap between academia and work needs and cope with advances in science and technology is challenging. Since IPSF PE is the section concerned with providing an equal and comprehensive education system that meets global standards, IPSF PE initiatives pursue development opportunities to support students and recent graduates with competencies (knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values) to develop the pharmaceutical workforce. So, the PE committee involves internship opportunities, implements distinct pharmacy practice and pharmaceutical sciences associated projects, and provides two kinds of publications, which support research initiatives and PE activities and provide guidance for advocating for pharmacy education-related issues (IPSF, 2020b).

Through this aim, IPSF uncovers partnerships with key international organisations, such as the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP), the International Federation of Medical Students Associations (IFMSA), and the International Veterinary Students' Association (IVSA). Accordingly, IPSF could implement awareness campaigns on many health emergencies while emphasising interprofessional collaboration as a means to achieve comprehensive education. IPSF aims to provide a better understanding of the collaborations in pharmacy education, so it can identify improvement areas and define the strategic goals for the upcoming mandates (IPSF, 2021). Consequently, organisational e-mails and archival documents were reviewed, and IPSF leaders were consulted to access more reports demonstrating impactful collaborations that influenced pharmacy education and workforce development. Also, e-mails were sent to previous IPSF PE chairs to share their insights in this context. This paper reports the results of the principal collaborations in previous mandates.

IPSF collaborations

Collaborations with FIP

IPSF is a strategic partner of FIP and focuses on implementing projects to advance pharmacy and pharmaceutical sciences education. Every year in November, the IPSF Pharmacy Education Committee supports the Nanjing Statements' implementation by organising Nanjing Statements' webinars and awareness campaigns. The Nanjing Statements on pharmacy and pharmaceutical science education are one of the primary documents that were adopted at the Nanjing Conference organised by the FIP in November 2016. The Nanjing Declarations describe the envisioned future for pharmaceutical education needed to enhance professional standards worldwide (Law *et al.*, 2019). As such, IPSF celebrates the Nanjing Statements and invites one of the FIP leaders to an online webinar where they can promote the Nanjing Statements and incentivise the students and recent graduates to be involved in its implementation at their universities. IPSF aims to make its members aware of the Nanjing Statements and to take the initiative of its implementation at their universities to improve pharmacy and pharmaceutical science education (Williams *et al.*, 2019)

Moreover, IPSF pays regard to FIP Development Goals (FDGs) whenever organising events targeting future pharmacists to enable the advancement of pharmaceutical practice, sciences, and education. FDGs are a collection of 21 intertwined objectives designed to be a template for the achievement of a better and sustainable future for the pharmacy profession. They align with FIP's mission to support global health by advancing pharmacy education and the pharmacy profession in accordance with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The three main pillars of FDGs are pharmacy practice, science, and workforce and education, all of which are interdependent. IPSF invited its members to develop concrete policies on global, regional, and local levels. It resulted in its global declaration on the role of pharmacists in the healthcare workforce, which was incorporated into their advocacy and pharmacy profession awareness initiatives. Furthermore, IPSF has organised a discussion session and a survey on FDGs. The main objective was to discuss how FDGs aim to increase the integration of pharmaceutical sciences, practice, and education globally. On top of that, it aimed to highlight how pharmacy students and young pharmacists/pharmaceutical scientists can take part with FIP to affect the outcomes of the FIP Development Goals, as well as to discuss how to increase the applicability of these goals (Sacre *et al.*, 2021).

The previous IPSF Chairpersons of the Information and Education Committee (in recent years, the name of the position was changed to become Chairperson of the Pharmacy Education Committee) also attended the WHO-FIP's World Congress on Pharmacy Education in 1998. They were included in the working group dedicated to developing the Good Pharmacy Education Practice (GPEP) policy, including the base draft concept for the Seven Star Pharmacist, which was accepted at the FIP Congress in 1997, where IPSF actively participated in the preparation of the document. Additionally, an annual education symposium, which is held during the IPSF World Congress, traditionally addresses a priority issue for pharmacy students in all countries.

Collaborations with UNESCO

The cooperation of IPSF with UNESCO goes back to the previous century. For example, the previous Chairpersons of Information and Education were also IPSF delegates to UNESCO's World Conference on Higher Education and the Fifth NGO Collective Consultation on Higher Education in 1998 (UNESCO, 1998). Also, UNESCO sponsored a forum for IPSF during the 47th Congress in 1997, discussing what kind of education would be necessary to achieve a professional profile.

Furthermore, IPSF acknowledges the need for constant changes in education. As such, IPSF has participated in UNESCO's Futures of Education Initiative, which was an ambitious attempt to re-evaluate education and help shape the future. This initiative has set a global debate in motion on how education, learning, and knowledge need to be reimagined in a world of increasing uncertainty, complexity, and precarity. UNESCO has established a high-level International Commission of opinion leaders with diverse expertise and standpoints from the political, academic, artistic, scientific, and business worlds as part of this initiative (International Commission on the Futures of Education, 2021). The IPSF Pharmacy Education Committee, in collaboration with the IPSF External Relations Committee and FIP Education Committee, organised two discussion sessions on Pharmacy Education post-COVID-19. In each session, six representatives from different countries shared the changes and problems experienced in their countries in pharmacy education during the pandemic and presented solutions for the future. The inputs received through these sessions were gathered, synthesised, and shared with UNESCO. The report of these discussion sessions indicates that the students should be the centre of the education system. For instance, universities should collect feedback from students to improve the education system. Social inequalities should be addressed on a

national and global level, as well. Solidarity and cooperation between students, teachers, internet companies and ministries, basically all the stakeholders of education, should act shoulder to shoulder for students to be educated in equal and better conditions (IPSF, 2020a).

Collaborations with other student organisations

IPSF partnered with the European Pharmaceutical Students' Association (EPSA) and compiled a document, "Pharmacy Education: A Vision of the Future", as a resource to help guide change in this area. This document, initially created in August 2007 by EPSA and IPSF, which was a part of the publication, was funded by the European Commission and was globally recognised by pharmacy schools, universities, and colleges. It also received the support of high-level and professional organisations, such as UNESCO, FIP, the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP), and the Academic Pharmacy Section of FIP (AcPS) itself (Fitzgerald, Pinto & Kos, 2007).

In November 2020 and 2021, IPSF liaised with the World Health Students' Alliance (WHSA) to develop and execute a comprehensive education course on Antimicrobial Resistance. It also collaborated with the International Federation of Medical Students Associations (IFMSA) and the international Veterinary Students' Association (IVSA) to release a research survey tailored for students from all health professions to collect data on good practices, challenges, and perspectives on Interprofessional Education worldwide.

IPSF APRO (Asia Pacific Regional Organisation) conducted an interprofessional collaboration (IPC) with MIMS Pte Ltd. and organised a webinar highlighting "How they worked with other healthcare professionals in response to COVID-19". Later, this collaboration successfully provided IPSF APRO students with an online pharmacy marketing internship opportunity at MIMS to promote education during the pandemic (IPSF, 2018).

IPSF, alongside other student federations, such as IFMSA and IVSA, regularly delivers joint statements on the Global Health Workforce Network (GHWN) at the WHO Executive Board Meetings and World Health Assemblies (WHAs) (IPSF, 2006; IPSF, 2007; FIP, 2009; IPSF, 2021). Also, IPSF, IFMSA, and IVSA have been collaborating on a project about antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and released a statement on the "One Health approach" (IPSF, 2017; Joseph-Ebare, 2017; IVSA, 2022).

Expanding collaboration with FIP AcPS

As a result of the described collaborations, IPSF successfully organised webinars, awareness campaigns, discussion sessions, surveys, policy statements, and other activities for improving pharmaceutical care delivery through enhancing pharmacy education and advocacy for reshaping education. However, IPSF aims to expand its collaborations with FIP because academics, students, policymakers, and other stakeholders of the pharmacy profession should be aligned and act together to improve pharmacy education to meet expanding societal healthcare demands. Therefore, an extended collaboration between IPSF and FIP, specifically with the AcPS, through a mutual vision for improving pharmacy education, practice, and research, would enhance efforts to develop a new generation of pharmacy professionals capable of facing global healthcare challenges. For instance, IPSF is a research-based organisation keen on building a generation aware of scientific research methodology. However, there is a persistent need for academics and experienced people to supervise research projects to enable IPSF students to publish quality research. One way to enhance the collaboration between IPSF and FIP would be the development of research-related initiatives, which would provide a platform for teaching the basics of scientific research, in addition to opening up research working groups where students and recent graduates would have the opportunity to participate in conducting real research work. Academic supervisors and experts from the FIP AcPS could guide these projects. An example of a specific research initiative of IPSF is the Young Researchers Forum (YRF), which is an online platform that gathers young pharmacists, junior researchers, and experts, so students and young pharmacists can post their articles, share trends in research, and exchange feedback with their global colleagues and the experts. FIP members could provide added value by joining the YRF as experts and supporting them in carrying out research activities under the umbrella of this platform. Another way to enhance the IPSF collaboration with FIP would be to organise mentorship programmes (as a long-term project, which may last for a year) or individual consultation sessions (as short-term mentoring) so that students and young pharmacists have a chance to meet experts to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and help plan for one's life and career, as well as to discuss topics such as how to balance between social life and academic study/work, leadership, identifying one's career orientation, success in academic study, research, and so on. Enhanced collaboration with FIP could involve research to evaluate the gaps in curricula under the supervision of the FIP AcPS since they may

have the power to advocate globally, push the change, and reshape academic curricula to narrow the gap between academia and work demands and respond to recent advances and challenges.

Summary

Collaborations accelerate the growth of both sides of the partnering organisations. In particular, pharmacy education and training require collaboration to generate a qualified pharmaceutical workforce. IPSF has official collaborations with WHO and UNESCO; it also works closely with the FIP and holds partnerships with other student organisations such as EPSA, IFMSA, and IVSA. Consequently, this enabled IPSF to be involved in policy changes and represent the voice of pharmacy students at international summits. Additionally, interprofessional collaborations broadened the horizons of IPSF fellows about global advances in health and working with a multi-disciplinary approach, and the collaborations with other international bodies enabled conducting of quality projects and learning opportunities. On the other hand, it was observed that IPSF does not have a well-developed collaboration with the FIP AcPS despite the persistent need for academic experts to improve research initiatives and provide mentorship. Pharmacy students, through IPSF, should align with academic personnel and other potential stakeholders to improve pharmacy education initiatives and future workforce preparedness.

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