

Challenges and opportunities: landscape of pharmacy profession in Brazil

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Opinion

Pharmacists have a rich historical tradition, with documented references dating back to 1550 B.C. discussing substances and formulas. Throughout Western history, pharmacists played a vital role, including notable figures such as John Stith Pemberton, the inventor of Coke, Carl William Scheele, who discovered tartaric acid, Friedrich Wilhelm Adam Sertürner, credited with discovering morphine, and Howard Florey and Ernst Chain, who isolated the penicillin molecule. These achievements highlight the significant contributions of pharmacists globally.

In the USA, pharmacy is considered one of the top 10 careers, boasting a median salary of \$132,750 per year in 2022. However, this reality differs worldwide. According to Brazil's 2022 database, the median salary for Brazilian pharmacists is \$12,616.34 per year, with variations based on chosen occupational activities.¹

The most common pharmacist activities in Brazil include working in drugstores, clinical analysis, hospital pharmacies, and public pharmacies, collectively employing 82% of Brazilian pharmacists. The median salary in these areas ranges between \$1,000 and \$1,500.

These findings are from a 2012 survey conducted by the Conselho Federal de Farmácia (Pharmacy Council), with 15,166 pharmacists responding to questions about the Brazilian pharmacist landscape.

Despite their qualifications, with 80.8% holding specializations, 14.6% master's degrees, and 4.6% Ph.D.s, Brazilian pharmacists face challenges. Many specialists struggle to find suitable employment, leading some to pursue alternative careers with better pay and working conditions.

This trend is reflected in the decreasing number of new students entering pharmacy programs. In 2012, only 46.6% of available positions in pharmacy degree programs were filled across Brazil. If this decline persists, Brazil could face a shortage of qualified pharmacists in the future.¹

The current state of Brazil's pharmacists is a cause for concern. Transforming this reality requires a concerted effort to elevate the value of pharmacists, advocate for better working conditions through the council, and propose competitive salary structures and promising career prospects. Drawing insights from the successes of American pharmacists can serve as a valuable guide to ensure the continued importance of this profession in Brazil.

Acknowledgments

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Conflicts of interest

Author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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