Help Wanted: Educating & Defining Tomorrow's Pharmacy Technician
Kevin Hope, RPh

Home Study Webcast
2 Slides Per Page
Help Wanted: Educating & Defining Tomorrow's Pharmacy Technician

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION
The direction of pharmacy technician education and training has been a source of debate within the profession since the recommendation was first introduced in the 1960. Fifty years later, discussions continue, with both the definition and scope of practice for pharmacy technicians varying drastically from state to state. Multiple key events have once again drawn this debate into the national spotlight, yielding one advocacy organization to publish a grading system for each state’s regulatory response to pharmacy technician educational requirements. Throughout the context of this session, influential events are examined within the context of our current framework for pharmacy technician education and training. Current pathways to pharmacy technician certification are addressed as well as key employment trends within the profession. The session is intended for both pharmacists and pharmacy technicians.

TARGET AUDIENCE
The target audience for this activity is pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and nurses in hospital, community, and retail pharmacy settings.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
After completing this activity, the pharmacist will be able to:

- Describe the variance in permissible functions of pharmacy technicians in the United States.
- Identify the current pathways to pharmacy technician certification
- Describe the current professional discussions and positions regarding the training and education of pharmacy technicians in the United States

After completing this activity, the pharmacy technician will be able to:

- Describe the variance in permissible functions of pharmacy technicians in the United States.
- Identify the current pathways to pharmacy technician certification
- Describe the current professional discussions and positions regarding the training and education of pharmacy technicians in the United States

ACCREDITATION
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Universal Activity No.: 0798-0000-17-194-H04
Credits: 1.25 contact hour (0.125 CEU)

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freeCE Expiration Date: 8/30/2020
ACPE Expiration Date: 8/30/2020

ACTIVITY TYPE
Knowledge-Based Home Study Webcast

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Kevin T. Hope, RPh is a Clinical Education Specialist with the PharmCon team in Conway, SC. Kevin began his career in pharmacy at an early age and has practiced as a pharmacist in a variety of settings, beginning with a retail pharmacy experience at Eckerd Drug Corporation in York, SC. Kevin transitioned from a retail setting to a Charleston, SC nuclear pharmacy setting in 2002, where he practiced for over 13 years. Kevin has served as an adjunct faculty member for the South Carolina College of Pharmacy, having coordinated and instructed the college’s ‘authorized user’ program for nuclear pharmacy. In addition, Kevin has direct experience in the education of pharmacy technicians, having directed the pharmacy technology program at Horry Georgetown Technical College in Myrtle Beach, SC prior to joining the PharmCon team.

Kevin has received several professional awards, including the Pfizer Leadership Award and the Innovative Pharmacy Practice Award from the South Carolina Pharmacy Association. Having served as a corporate communications trainer for Triad Isotopes, Kevin has presented to a variety of audiences, including a nuclear pharmacy symposium at the American Pharmacists Association annual meeting. Kevin has served as an independent editor for several Paradigm Publishing textbooks, and currently serves on the professional advisory board for Paradigm Publishing. Kevin’s passions lie in helping students achieve and surpass personal educational goals.

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Help Wanted:  
Educating and Defining Tomorrow’s Pharmacy Technologist

Who Is Hired?

- Pre-requisites?
- State Registration Required?
- Certification Required?  
  - From whom?
- Exam Required?  
  - What exam? What score is adequate?
- Background Check Required?
- Formal Education Required?  
  - How is quality measured?
Objectives

• Describe the variance in permissible functions of pharmacy technicians in the United States.
• Identify the current pathways to pharmacy technician certification
• Describe the current professional discussions and positions regarding the training and education of pharmacy technicians in the United States

Pharmacy Technician Education:
LET’S TALK! ... 1940’s

• Training courses introduced in the armed forces in the early 1940s
• More structured programs were developed by the military in 1958.
• In the late 1960s, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare recommended the development of “pharmacist aide” curricula in junior colleges and other educational institutions.

Pharmacy Technician Education: LET’S TALK! ... 1990’s

Volume 36, Issue 8, August 1996, Pages 515-520

White Paper on Pharmacy Technicians: Recommendations of Pharmacy Practitioner Organizations on the Functions, Training, and Regulation of Technicians

Perspective: Social Media Posts

“Not sure about those who went to school to be a pharmacy technician, but for me I was hired off of the street, learned quickly and now am nationally certified and the “go to” tech in the pharmacy setting if questions need to be answered by other techs and even the Pharmacist. Why someone would get in debt with student loans for thousands to tens of thousands of dollars just does not make sense to me.”

Renee
**Percentage Increase in Workforce Over Ten Years**

Percentage Increase from 2005 - 2015

- **Pharmacists**
- **Pharmacy Technicians**

**Number Employed, 2015 Data**

- **Pharmacists**
- **Pharmacy Technicians**

What Are Other Professions Doing?

- Clinical laboratory technician, 2–4 years of education
- Dental assistant, 1–2 years of education
- Physical therapy assistant, 2 years of education
- Paralegal, 2 years of education

Salary Comparisons

Average Annual Salary

Source: www.indeed.com/salaries; accessed 08/02/2017
What Do Pharmacy Technicians Do?

"... responsibilities include utilizing pharmacy systems to enter patient and drug information, ensuring information is entered correctly, filling prescriptions by retrieving, counting and pouring pharmaceutical drugs, verifying medicine is correct, and checking for possible interactions."

Job description for a major retail chain pharmacy in New York, Indeed.com

What Do Pharmacy Technicians Do?

"... knowledgeable in the use and stocking of automated medication cabinets; maintains cost effective inventory as appropriate for pharmacy. Checks floor stock and/or pharmacy stock for outdated and proper storage on a monthly basis; demonstrates technical skills in areas as required by duties in the pharmacy including, but not limited to, calculations, aseptic technique and cytotoxic drug properties."

Job Posting From A Colorado Hospital, Indeed.com
What Do Pharmacy Technicians Do?

“Fills orders and prescriptions accurately and courteously. Stocks carts, patient drawers, and/or medicine sets correctly according to order and delivery time requirements. Measures appropriate quantity, places in container and labels appropriately. Delivers pharmaceuticals to appropriate area or distribution points by the time requested. Inventories and updates patient drawers and/or distribution points periodically, making additions/deletions necessary to meet prescription specifications.”

Job Description for a North Carolina Hospital, Indeed.com

Minimal Qualifications

Job Description for a North Carolina Hospital, Indeed.com (continued from previous slide)

**Education:** High School Diploma and/or Equivalent

**Course:** Either a graduate of a formal Pharmacy Technician Program, be certified by the NC Board of Pharmacy, and/or be receiving or having received on the job training.
What Do Pharmacy Technicians Do?

Utah Statute R156-17b-601:
“... A pharmacy technician may perform any task associated with the physical preparation and processing of prescription and medication orders including ... (j) counseling for over-the-counter drugs and dietary supplements under the direction of the supervising pharmacist ...”

What Do Pharmacy Technicians Do?

Maryland Statute 10.34.34.03.03: “... A pharmacy technician may not: ... provide information, explanation, or recommendations to patients and health care practitioners about the safe and effective use of prescription or nonprescription drugs or devices...”
What Do Pharmacy Technicians Do?

Albertsons and the Washington State University College of Pharmacy (WSU) worked together to develop the first pilot program to train pharmacy technicians to administer immunizations with permission from the Idaho Board of Pharmacy.


Minimal Qualifications

ARE there minimal qualifications?

WHO is setting the qualifications?
Licensure of Pharmacists

Variable from state to state, but shares a common structure:

• Graduation from an accredited college of pharmacy
• Passing score on the North American Pharmacy Licensing Examination (NAPLEX)

Licensure of Technicians

Highly variable among states, no commonly shared structure

Pharmacy Technician Training In the News

Pharmacy Technician Training In the News:

The Emily Jerry Foundation for Patient Safety and Safe Medication Practices

Tragic Event Driving Change Within the Medical Community

https://emilyjerryfoundation.org/
“Although the public expects all healthcare workers to be well educated, this basic expectation is not being met in the case of pharmacy technicians. There are no uniform state requirements for ensuring the competency of technicians, due, in part, to a lack of public awareness about the scope of technician responsibilities.”

Christopher Jerry, Head of the Emily Jerry Foundation
From ‘Job’ to ‘Career’

Paraprofessional:
“*A person trained to assist a doctor, lawyer, teacher, or other professional, but not licensed to practice in the profession.*”

- Paralegal
- Paramedic
- Paraprofessional educator

https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/paraprofessional

Liability

Are pharmacists ready to delegate more tasks to technicians? How will liability fit into the equation?

Eric Cropp, PharmD Case
Pharmacy Technician Education: Let’s Talk!... 2000’s

White Paper on Pharmacy Technicians 2002: Needed Changes can no longer wait

The following organizations have endorsed this document:
Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy, American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy, American College of Apothecaries, American College of Clinical Pharmacy, American Council on Pharmaceutical Education, American Pharmaceutical Association, American Society of Consultant Pharmacists, American Society of Health-System Pharmacists, Board of Pharmaceutical Specialties, Commission for Certification in Geriatric Pharmacy, Pharmacy Technician Certification Board, and Pharmacy Technician Educators Council

Am J Health-Syst Pharm. 2003; 60:37-51

The NABP Task Force on Pharmacy Technician Education and Training Programs

October 2009
Rosemont, IL
National Association of Boards of Pharmacy

Mission Statement:
“NABP is the independent, international, and impartial association that assists its member boards and jurisdictions for the purpose of protecting the public health.”

Rosemont Recommendations:

• NABP Should Encourage Boards of Pharmacy to Require as an Element of Pharmacy Technician Certification Completion of an Education and Training Program that Meets Minimum Standardized Guidelines

• NABP Should Encourage Boards of Pharmacy to Require as an Element of Pharmacy Technician Certification Completion of an Accredited Education and Training Program by 2015

https://nabp.pharmacy/about/

Rosemont Recommendations:

- NABP Should Assist in Developing a National Accreditation System for Pharmacy Technician Education and Training Programs that is Based within the Profession of Pharmacy and Utilizes a Single Accrediting Agency by 2015

- NABP Should Encourage ACPE and ASHP to Work Collaboratively to Develop an Accreditation System for Pharmacy Technician Education and Training Programs that Reflects All Pharmacy Practice Settings and, if Feasible, to Consolidate the Activities into One Accrediting Body, Preferably ACPE


Rosemont Recommendations:

- NABP Should Encourage PTCB to Change The Process by which it Determines Who is Qualified to Sit for Its Examination to Include Completion of an Accredited Pharmacy Technician Education and Training Program and High School Diploma or GED Verification

- NABP Should Encourage PTCB to Provide NABP with Information on its Certified Pharmacy Technicians so that NABP may Enhance the Pharmacy Technician Data Contained in the NABP Clearinghouse to Provide the Information Necessary for the State Boards of Pharmacy to Protect the Public Health.

Rosemont Recommendations:

• NABP Should Encourage ASHP to Revise Its Current Accreditation Standards for Pharmacy Technician Education and Training Programs to Require Accredited Providers to Inform Potential Program Applicants of Applicable State Requirements for Registration or Licensure


Pharmacy Technician Certification
Pharmacy Technician Certification

What do you mean by “certified”???

Current Certification Options

**ASHP**
- Passing Score on PTCE
- $115
- Eligibility Requirements Apply
- State Requirements Vary

**NHA**
- Passing Score on ExCPT
- $129
- Eligibility Requirements Apply
- Not Recognized by all states

Why Two Certification Exams?

"We didn't set out to compete with PTCB. First, drug chains asked for a standardized test to assess training. Then Virginia put out a request for proposal and we won. We are able and willing to innovate, which is causing [PTCB] to do likewise—to everybody's advantage."

Kenneth Schafermeyer, former ICPT education director

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE (2006)

• PTCB offered exams four times annually. There were about 165 test sites nationwide, but few sites offered exams on all four dates. Candidates were required to register two months prior to exam date. The test cost was $120.

• ExCPT offered more than 300 test dates at over 1,000 computerized testing centers. Applicants could take the test at a time of their choosing, usually within 48 hours of registration. The test fee was $95.
Why Two Certification Exams?

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE (2006)

Both sides in the debate had a financial stake in the outcome:
• ASHP, APhA, and NABP earned royalties from PTCB
• NCPA and NACDS received royalties from ICPT

Pharmacy Technician Certification

“Certified!” No, wait, “What state do you live in again?”
Pharmacy Technician Certification

NHA (National Health Career Association) Certifications

- Medical Assistant (CCMA)
- Phlebotomy Technician (CPT)
- Medical Administrative Assistant (CMAA)
- EKG Technician (CET)
- Electronic Health Records Specialist (CEHRS)
- **Pharmacy Technician (CPhT)**
- Billing & Coding Specialist (CBCS)
- Patient Care Technician (CPCT/A)

http://www.nhanow.com/certifications/pharmacy-technician?utm_campaign
NHA – ExCPT Exam

• Successful completion of a pharmacy technician training program within the past 5 years

   OR

• At least one year of work experience with 1200+ hours of supervised pharmacy related work in the past 3 years.

   AND

• High school diploma (or GED equivalent) (or pending within the next 30 days)
• $115 (as of 7/2017)

http://www.nhanow.com/certifications/pharmacy-technician?utm_campaign

NHA – ExCPT Exam

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic Tested:</th>
<th>Percentage of Exam:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regulations and Pharmacy Duties</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs and Drug Therapy</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dispensing Process</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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PTCB

Established in 1995 by the American Pharmacists Association; American Society of Health-System Pharmacists; Illinois Council of Health-System Pharmacists; and Michigan Pharmacists Association; and joined by the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (NABP) in 2001.

https://www.ptcb.org/about-ptcb#.WX95cojyvIU

“Advocates for a single national standard for pharmacy technician certification that is recognized and supported by the profession.”
PTCB (Pharmacy Technician Certification Board)

Eligibility requirements:
• High school diploma or equivalent educational diploma
• Full disclosure of all criminal and State Board of Pharmacy registration or licensure actions.
• Compliance with all applicable PTCB Certification policies
• Passing score on the Pharmacy Technician Certification Exam (PTCE).
• $129 (as of 7/2017)

PTCB – PTCE Exam

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOMAIN</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE WEIGHT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacology for Technicians</td>
<td>13.75 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacy Law &amp; Regulations</td>
<td>12.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sterile &amp; Non-sterile Compounding</td>
<td>8.75 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medication Safety</td>
<td>12.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacy Quality Assurance</td>
<td>7.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medication Order Entry &amp; Fill Process</td>
<td>17.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacy Inventory Management</td>
<td>8.75 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacy Billing &amp; Reimbursement</td>
<td>8.75 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacy Information System Usage &amp; Application</td>
<td>10 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PTCE / ExCPT Pass Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exam</th>
<th>2016 Pass Rate:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ExCPT</td>
<td>62.97 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTCE</td>
<td>58 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exams Administered in 2016

- **PTCE**: 60,000 exams
- **ExCPT**: 50,000 exams

https://www.ptcb.org/who-we-serve/pharmacy-technicians/statistics#.WXY4lyvUL
PTCB Strategy, 2016

“By 2020, the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB) announced 3 years ago, PTCB will require technician candidates seeking initial certification to successfully complete an ASHP/ACPE-accredited education program. Our 2020 requirement supports and advances improved patient care and safety across all practice settings.”

Col (Ret.) Everett B. McAllister, BSPharm, MPA, USAF, BSC, executive director and CEO of PTCB


PTCB Strategy, 2017

2020
PTCB Strategy, 2017

“We have determined that additional deliberation and research are needed to address stakeholder input, develop supporting policy, and conduct further study of technician roles.”

Larry Wagenknecht, BPharm, Chair of the PTCB Board of Governors, and CEO of the Michigan Pharmacists Association

Pharmacy Technician Certification
Perspective: Social Media Posts

“I am one of those people unfortunately [who paid for an educational program]. I received an associate’s degree in applied science (pharmacy technology) and have $27,000 worth of school loans. I signed up for the program without knowing ANYTHING about pharmacy and that you do not need formal education [in my state]. It does help me in finding jobs but I do regret it often!”

Mary

Pharmacy Technician Education: Let’s Talk!... 2017

Pharmacy Technician Shareholder Consensus Conference
February 2017, Irving TX

ASHP, ACPE, as well as an advisory committee of technicians and pharmacists

Pharmacy Technician Shareholder Consensus Conference

Participants:
Pharmacists, Pharmacy technicians, Educators, Employers, State and national pharmacy associations, State boards of pharmacy, and Accreditors

Format:
Keynote speakers, panel discussions, and daily work group sessions.

“we must respond to the expectations of the public and align on how to meet them. The public expects quality and safety from all members of the pharmacy team including technicians, an accountable method to measure core competencies, and a uniform standard for technicians.”

Michael A. Moné, BSPharm, JD, FAPhA, Vice President and Associate General Counsel for Cardinal Health
Access to Accredited Programs

- Accredited distance education programs for pharmacy technicians are increasing access to standards based education.
  - www.medcerts.com

- The accreditation standard was recently amended for flexibility related to the number of experiential sites and the pharmacy compounding requirement.

Employer Based Pharmacy Technician Education: Wal-Mart

**Track designed specifically to satisfy business needs**
- 160 hours didactic, 80 hours experiential, 3.5 hours simulated skills development

**ASHP-ACPE Accredited Track, (to meet requirements in 2 states)**
- 160 hours didactic, 80 hours experiential, 3.5 hours simulated skills development
- 160 hours experiential education, and 200 hours allocated among didactic, simulated, and experiential education
- Education in sterile compounding
PTEC (Pharmacy Technician’s Educator’s Council)

“PTEC endorses the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB) exam as the only national standard for pharmacy technician certification. PTEC encourages all state boards of pharmacy to require successful completion of PTCB’s certification exam as a minimum requirement for pharmacy technician practice.”

Continuing Education Requirements for Certified Pharmacy Technicians

State Requirements Vary Drastically
Each Certifying Body Has Specific Requirements for CE
  • NHA
  • PTCB

“Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young.”

Henry Ford
NHA

Continuing Education Requirements
10 continuing education credits every 2 years
Inclusive renewal process and fee, completed every two years, you get uninterrupted access to all your NHA resources. Benefits exclusive to NHA certified professionals include:
• Unlimited access to continuing education content with no additional fees
• Reduced fees for NHA certified professionals with multiple credentials
• Active/Current certification holders are searchable by their credential/can be verified by employers

PTCB (Pharmacy Technician Certification Board)

Continuing Education Requirements
Minimum of 20 hours during each 2 year recertification cycle.
- Must be in pharmacy technician-specific subject matter.

For recertification candidates:
- 1 hour must be in the subject of pharmacy law
- 1 hour must be in the subject of patient safety

For reinstatement candidates:
- 2 hours must be in the subject of pharmacy law
- 1 hour must be in the subject of patient safety.

A maximum of 10 hours may be earned by completing a relevant college course with a grade of “C” or better. A maximum of five (5) hours may be earned by completing in-service projects.
Decoding the ACPE number for Continuing Education Credits

“Preventing Medication Errors in Community Pharmacy”
0798-0000-16-009-L05-T

0798-0000-16-009-L05-T: designates a “live course” versus a “home study course” (H)

0798-0000-16-009-L05-T: designates a course approved for “technicians” versus “pharmacists” (P)

---

Decoding the ACPE number for Continuing Education Credits

“Preventing Medication Errors in Community Pharmacy”
0798-0000-16-009-L05-T

0798-0000-16-009-L05-T: designates a type of course by content

- 01 – disease state management
- 02 – HIV/AIDS
- 03 – Law
- 04 – general pharmacy
- 05 – patient safety
- 06 – immunization
- 07 - compounding
Percentage Increase In Wages Between 2005 - 2015

Perspective: Social Media

“OMG! I don’t know where y’all work but I don’t even make $9 an hour and I’m certified. Going back to school is an option for me being as I feel I will never make enough to support me and my son without living paycheck to paycheck. I love my job for sure but we do a lot of work for McDonalds workers to make more than we do.”

Melissa
Cohesiveness of Profession

We must **FUNCTION** as a profession ...
We must **LISTEN** as a profession ...
We must **SPEAK** as a profession ...
We must **ACT** as a profession ...

A Cohesive Profession

Pharmacists can not function effectively without good technicians. **Help them carve a path!**

Technicians can not function without good pharmacists. **Push for education. Carve a path!**
Advancing the Pharmacist/Technician Relationship

**Thoughts:**
- Include on hospital committees
- Supervisory roles
- Must train to be “teachers”
  Others?

Minimal Qualifications

ARE there minimal qualifications?
Why Not?

WHO is setting the qualifications?
Should they be?
Pharmacy Technician Education 2017...

LET’S TALK!
LET’S ACT!

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• https://www.aier.org/cost-living-calculator
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- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpZ7072HjE
Exam Questions:

1. Which of the following statements is accurate?
   a. Pharmacy Technicians may administer immunizations in every state
   b. Pharmacy Technicians may counsel patients regarding over the counter medications in every state
   c. Pharmacy Technicians must register with the state board of pharmacy in every state
   d. All of the above statements are accurate
   e. None of the above statements are accurate

2. Which of the following statements is accurate?
   a. Effective January 1, 2020, all applicants for the PTCE will need to have completed an ASHP accredited educational program
   b. Both ExCPT and PTCE are recognized in all states as viable pathways for state certification requirements
   c. All educational programs for pharmacy technicians must be accredited by ASHP or NHA
   d. All of the above statements are accurate
   e. None of the above statements are accurate

3. The licensure of pharmacists in the United States:
   a. Requires graduation from an accredited college of pharmacy
   b. Requires initial certification and licensure as a pharmacy technician
   c. Requires professional certification from NHA
   d. All of the above statements are true
   e. None of the above statements are true

4. The Emily Jerry Foundation assigns each state a ‘grade’ based upon:
   a. the number of fatal medication errors that occur in each state
   b. the number of job opportunities for pharmacy technicians in each state
   c. the mechanisms in which pharmacy technicians are trained, educated, and licensed in each state
   d. the state’s adherence to national policy regarding the certification of pharmacy technicians
5. The number of pharmacists has increased at a rapid pace, while the number of pharmacy technicians declined over the past 10 years in the United States.
   a. True
   b. False

6. In comparing income data from the period of 2005-2015, both pharmacists and pharmacy technicians have posted increases at or above the national cost of living index over this ten year period.
   a. True
   b. False

7. An individual is using the initials CPhT behind his/her name. Use of these initials means that the individual has:
   a. Passed the PTCE
   b. Passed the ExCPT
   c. Passed the NAPLEX
   d. Both ‘a’ and ‘b’ are correct
   e. None of the above are correct

8. A high school graduate with no prior experience in pharmacy and no formal pharmacy education is eligible to take the ExCPT.
   a. True
   b. False

9. Pass rates for the PTCE are very high, with over 90% of applicants passing the exam in 2016.
   a. True
   b. False

10. In 2016, the number of PTCE exams administered exceeded the number of ExCPT exams administered.
    a. True
    b. False