



**Professionals and academics Degrees in Pharmacy: “Understanding the designation of each degree and knowing which degree to pursue for the right perspective future work.”**

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**Letter to Editor**

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**Letter Comment**

I do not usually respond to articles in journals or in other means of scientific sharing knowledge, but as Pharmacy Student pursuing a PhD in Clinical Pharmacy and after reading few articles<sup>[1-4]</sup> relating on the status of PharmD/PhD (Pharmacy), I felt as though I should add my comments to the issue especially to concerning the clarification of the several degrees in pharmacy, which are sometimes misleading by the title. According to the web-base encyclopedia Wikipedia, pharmacy is defined as the health profession that links the health science with the chemical sciences and it is charged with ensuring the safe and safety use of pharmaceutical drugs.<sup>[5]</sup> The pharmacy profession and the role of pharmacists in the modern healthcare system have evolved quite rapidly over the last couple of decades.<sup>[6]</sup>

After obtaining my Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy at China Pharmaceutical University, I discussed with one of my teachers who became my supervisor later, for the possibility of pursuing my Master of Science in Clinical Pharmacy. That's when, through the discussion he had the opportunity to explain to me that different degree earned in Pharmacy field are differently recognized from one country to another. It was my first time to clearly distinguish between the professionals and the academics degrees especially in field of Pharmacy. A professional degree is generally a college degree that allows you to work in a certain profession, many professional degrees are offered at the master's level, while others can be obtained with only bachelor's or even associate degrees.<sup>[7-8]</sup> PharmD (Doctor of Pharmacy) is the common professional degree (not a graduate degree) usually that comes to mind in pharmacy's field. An academic degree is a position and title within a

college or university that is usually awarded in recognition of the recipient having either satisfactory completed a prescribed course of study.<sup>[9]</sup> The most common academic degrees awarded today are Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral degrees. The modern pharmacy profession has shifted considerably away from a product focus and towards a patient focus. To cope with these changes, and to meet the demand of the modern pharmacy profession, the pharmacy curriculum, especially in the developed world, has evolved significantly.<sup>[6]</sup>

In the western countries and in several countries where their education system is based on The United Kingdom or on The United States Educational system, BPharm (Bachelor of Pharmacy), MPharm (Master of Pharmacy) and PharmD (Doctor of Pharmacy) are the different degrees awarded in pharmacy. According to different countries, the BPharm (e.g.: Australia, Canada, Hong Kong), MPharm (e.g.: Australia, United Kingdom) or PharmD (e.g.: India, Nigeria, France, United States) is the prerequisite for registration to practice as a pharmacist. But students should come across that at the end of the MPharm program, they don't usually obtain a master degree, what they get is only an undergraduate bachelor's degree. The name of the program itself is sometimes misleading. Basically it is named Master of Pharmacy due of the extensive details in the studies. Even the PharmD in some countries (e.g.: Nigeria) is an undergraduate degree, which is far beyond from a PhD in Pharmaceutical Sciences. Nevertheless depending to the length of the study, they might be referred as a master Degree or a postgraduate coursework or research degree in the field of pharmacy.

In 2006, China Pharmaceutical University was allowed by the Ministry of Education to re-establish the 5-years of BS in Clinical pharmacy, with 4 years of study and 1 year of internship<sup>[10-11]</sup>. To complete a Master Degree in clinical pharmacy or in any pharmaceutical sciences, the students should study for other 3-years. Just from the length of the study (7 to 8 years), we can clearly notice that a Master Degree awarded in Clinical Pharmacy (or in any pharmaceutical Sciences) goes far beyond the MPharm awarded in other countries. Now, as there is an upsurge in clinical pharmacy, many developing



countries have expanded their pharmacy curriculum to a 5-or 6-years program that issues a doctorate of

pharmacy degree (PharmD). However, it is still to be determined whether these countries are genuinely interested in a practice-base model or simply want their graduates to enroll in the US System.<sup>[2]</sup> This distinction has been really obvious when we talk about PharmD and PhD (Pharmacy). Students should know the difference between these different degrees and in which educational system they are applied and recognized.

In terms of pharmacy professional degree vs. Pharmacy academic degree, a controversy arises. Since every country has its own standards of pharmacy practice, is it right to at least produce similarity in terms of degree that these graduates are getting from different universities in the world?<sup>[2]</sup> Regardless their countries, different graduates from different part of the world should be able to write any pharmacy board registration, in consideration of their education length spent to get their basic degree.

In conclusion, my opinion is that it has been a lot of misleading between professional and academics degrees awarded in pharmacy's field. While the PharmD program emphasizes the professional practice of pharmacy, the PhD degree program emphasizes research placed on acquisition of research of skills, experimental design, and solution of problem. It's a highest degree awarded. I appeal to pharmacy students of developing countries who wish to pursue their study or to practice as pharmacist in western countries or in other countries; they should first understand the designation of the various professional and academic degrees awarded in pharmacy and secondly know which degree is the prerequisite for the license examination.

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## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Authors contributed equally to all aspects of the study.

## PEER REVIEW

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## CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no competing interests