



PHARMACIST: ON DUTY

What do O. Henry, Benedict Arnold, Sir Isaac Newton, Hubert Humphrey and Ned Flanders have in common? If you guessed that they were all pharmacists at one time—you're correct! A pharmacist, as defined in the Standard Occupational Classification Manual, is one who dispenses drugs prescribed by health practitioners and provides information to patients about medications and their uses. They may advise physicians and other health practitioners on the selection, dosage, interactions, and side effects of medications.

In early nineteenth century America, pharmacy was a trade, not a profession, and entering the field was through apprenticeship programs. Pharmacists were experts in chemistry and botany with knowledge not only of wine-making, but perfumes, essential oils and soda fountain syrups. Most took pride in producing their own medicine rather than purchasing them from manufacturers who were scarce in number and had a reputation for poor products. Many of the current drug companies were founded by pharmacists from that era.

Prior to 1992, a bachelor of science in pharmacy was adequate education. After that year, all U.S. schools and colleges of pharmacy went to the Doctor of Pharmacy as the only degree offered. It requires six years of study: two in



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pre-pharmacy and four in professional pharmacy studies. To practice in any state, a pharmacist must be licensed.

About 62 percent of pharmacists practice in community pharmacies, either independently owned or chain drug-stores, grocery or department store or mass merchandisers. About 20 percent work in hospitals and the remainder are employed by home healthcare, pharmaceutical manufacturers, health insurance companies, public health-care services, college faculty, and the military, to name a few.

Pharmacist is deemed a five-star job in Utah, which means that it requires a bachelor's degree or higher, has a strong employment outlook and higher-than-average wages.

Today, pharmacists are assisted in their duties by pharmacy technicians and pharmacy aides. Technicians, who are also licensed and under the direct supervision of a pharmacist, may measure, mix, count, label and record amounts and dosages of medications. Administrative duties include maintaining patients' records, preparing insurance claim forms, and taking inventories. The duties vary depending on state rules and regulations. Most are trained on the job and most states have put a limit on how many technicians can be employed per pharmacist. The pharmacist is required to check the technician's work before it is dispensed. Pharmacy technician in Utah is also a five- star job.

Pharmacy aides usually provide administrative support, such as answering phones, cashiering, stocking shelves, etc. In some states technician and aide duties overlap; in others they are clearly delineated. A high school diploma and on-the-job training is usually the minimum requirement in this field. In Utah, pharmacy aide is a one-star job, meaning that it has a limited employment outlook and low wages.

Remember the earlier mention of soda fountain syrups? In the 19th century, it was common for pharmacists to sell mineral water, believed to have healing powers. They often mixed bark, nuts, berries and herbs in it to improve the taste and efficacy. After it was discovered that mineral water bubbled because of carbon dioxide content, a method was developed to carbonate mineral water. From that beginning, Pepsi Cola®, Vernor's Ginger Ale®, Coca Cola® and Dr. Pepper® were all developed by pharmacists. 🍹

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wages

	Annual Median	
	Utah	United States
Pharmacist	\$104,840	\$106,410
Pharmacy Technician	\$ 30,230	\$ 27,710
Pharmacy Aide	\$ 20,350	\$ 20,100

Data from Utah Department of Workforce Services, May, 2008

