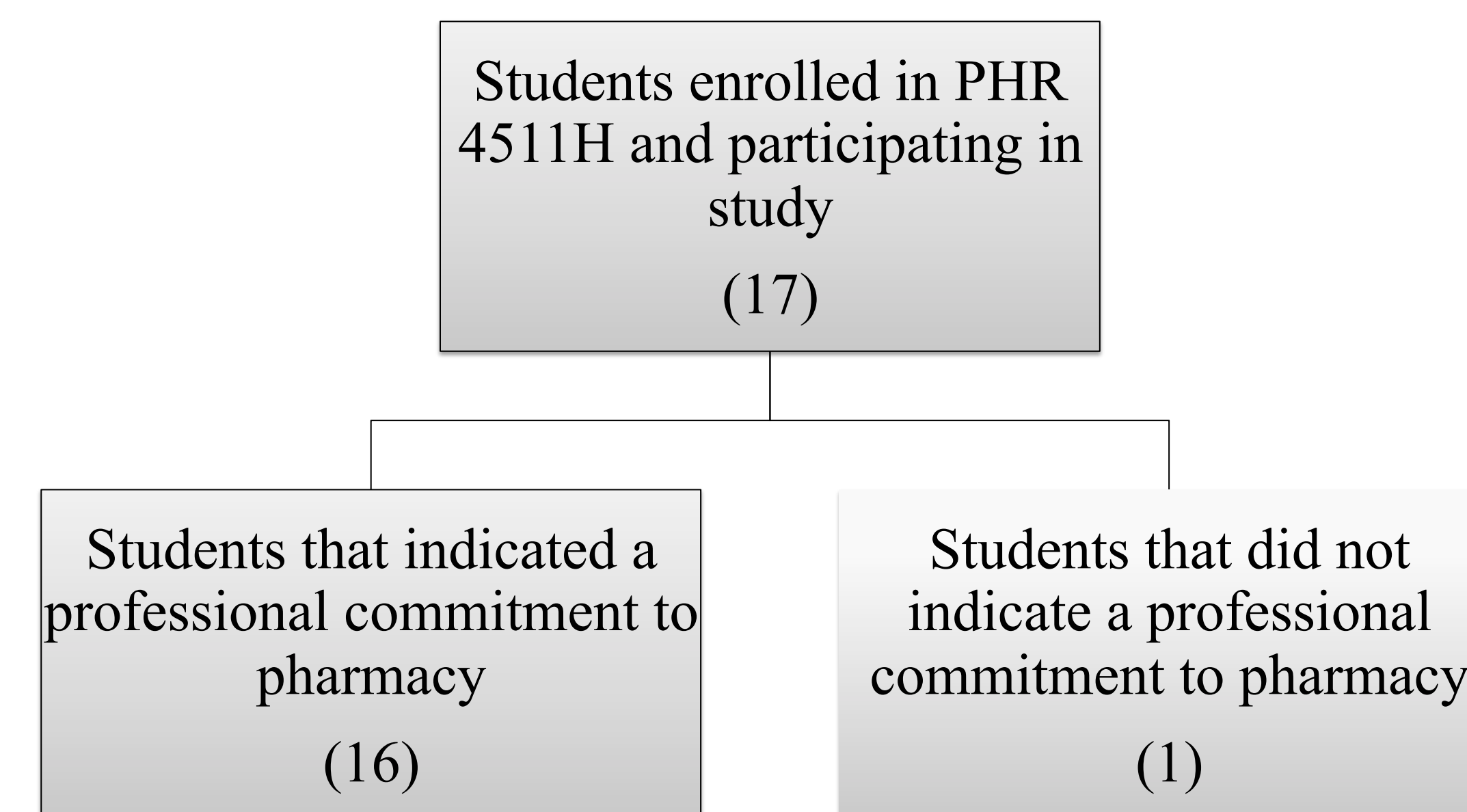


INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

With admissions to PharmD programs becoming increasingly competitive, sophisticated pre-pharmacy preparation is becoming increasingly important. Admissions committees are now looking at measures beyond academic merit to assess potential for success within a PharmD program and the profession. Factors such as motivation to become a pharmacist and attitudes regarding patient-centered care are being evaluated in application reviews and interviews of candidates. Applicants to PharmD programs are expected to exhibit commitment to the profession before entering pharmacy school. Little research has been done to analyze how students develop this commitment.

This study is designed to provide a narrative relating to the formulation of professional commitment among undergraduate pre-pharmacy students enrolled in an introductory professional course. It is expected that the results of this study will expand our understanding of how student aspirations are influenced by their enrollment in a course designed to immerse students in the study of pharmacy's professional infrastructure, important contemporary issues and developments in the field, interactions with innovative professional role models, and experiences in a patient-centered practice center.

Commitment



Sixteen participants indicated a commitment to the pharmacy profession at the conclusion of this course. One student indicated a commitment to medicine.

All students cited that the course proved beneficial to their career development. Every student in the study solidified or increased their commitment to the profession as a result of participating in the Introduction to Pharmacy course.

In the case of the exception, the student indicated an interest in pursuing anesthesiology, citing that this profession is of interest since it is "like pharmacy in real time."

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Vocabulary

Students' vocabulary when discussing their interest in pharmacy was much more sophisticated during the second interviews (conducted at the conclusion of the course). Not only did they use pharmacy-related terms more accurately, but the range of their vocabulary expanded dramatically. For example, "talking to patients" became "counseling patients" and there were frequent references to "MTM," "provider status," "personalized medicine," "collaborative practice," "telepharmacy," etc., which suggests a better understanding of pertinent terms and a degree of mastery when using these words in conversation.

Conceptualization

Students' expanded conceptualization of pharmacy's scope of practice included both practice settings (locations) and practice functions (pharmacists' responsibilities). Definitions of pharmacy evolved to include functions beyond community practice, and students exhibited a better understanding of the evolution of the pharmacist's professional responsibilities. Students began to define the role of the pharmacist in ways that included functions such as providing care and counseling patients in addition to dispensing medications.

Passion

In general, students developed a more focused passion for the profession and were prepared to make more informed decisions regarding career aspirations than they were at the beginning of the course. An increased passion for the profession seemed to correspond with the more accurate conceptualization of the profession that was observed. The more students discovered the depth and breadth and the patient-centered focus of the profession, they easier these students could visualize themselves as pharmacists.

METHODS

This study was conducted during Spring Semester 2015 at the College of Pharmacy at The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio.

Participants

- N = 17 participants (4 male, 13 female)
- Participants were recruited from students enrolled in Pharmacy 4511H – Honors Introduction to Pharmacy.
- Ages ranged from 18 to 21 years old.

Measurement/Instrumentation

- Semi-structured personal interviews were conducted at the beginning and at the end of the semester (selected questions shown as **List I** to the right)
- Individual interviews were recorded and transcribed. Transcriptions were shared with each individual as an initial means of member checking.
- To ensure credibility, the following methods were followed:
 - Prolonged engagement and persistent observation
 - Negative case analyses
 - Triangulation
 - Progressive subjectivity
 - Member checks
 - Dependability audit

Data Analysis

- Analytic induction was used to categorize data, determine intercategory relationships, develop working hypotheses, and refine these hypotheses
- Coding was used to categorize data and clustered data was reviewed to reveal major themes, trends, commonalities, and discrepancies.

List I. Selected Questions for Example

- What is pharmacy and what do pharmacists do?
- What do you envision in terms of your future career in pharmacy?
- What are some of the important contemporary developments in pharmacy?
- How would you describe your level of passion about the pharmacy profession?
- What do you see yourself doing as a future pharmacy practitioner?

CONCLUSION & FUTURE APPLICATIONS

These narratives suggest that an introductory pre-professional course can positively influence students' conceptualization of, and commitment to, their intended career in pharmacy. In the interest of developing more informed pre-professional students and competitive professional school applicants, other health professional schools could benefit from offering such an introductory undergraduate course. More research is required before extrapolating these results to other institutions and/or other courses.



Introduction to Pharmacy
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