

Industrial pharmacists survey 2008

At regular intervals the Industrial Pharmacy Group of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society carries out a survey of all registered industrial pharmacists. A variety of questions (open and structured) are asked on salaries, benefits and activities undertaken in the pharmaceutical industry. In this article, Farrah Al-Ghita and Janet A. Halliday, describe the latest survey's findings and conclusions

Between July and September 2008, a 13th survey was carried out among the members of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's Industrial Pharmacists Group. A questionnaire was sent to all group members in the UK who had indicated that they were practising as industrial pharmacists on the MyRPSGB website.

Of around 2,307 industrial pharmacists sent the survey, 489 (a return rate of 21 per cent) sent them back. Of these 444 (91 per cent) were suitable for analysis. This is equivalent to approximately 19 per cent of the total number of industrial pharmacists surveyed. This was much lower than in previous surveys. In 2003 the return was 31 per cent return (*PJ*, 27 March 2004, pp393–7) and in 2000 it was 41 per cent (*PJ*, 6 January 2001, pp9–10). Part time-workers accounted for 63 (14 per cent) of the responses analysed in this most recent survey.

Group members were asked to provide a variety of information including details of their age, gender, area of activity (current, on entry into pharmaceutical industry and in the future) and their level of responsibility and benefits.

Main findings

Age and gender distribution Some 253 respondents (57 per cent) are male (60 per cent in 2003 and 2000, 61 per cent in 1997 and 69 per cent in 1993). The median ages are 43 years old for female and 49 years old for male industrial pharmacists.

There is an indication that the respondents are ageing. In 2003 the median ages were 39 for females and 47 for males, and within the past five years the minimum age of pharmacists entering the industry has been 26. The average age of both male and female industrial pharmacists is approximately 47 years.

In this survey, 33 women and 27 men responding were under the age of 36 (14 per cent in total less than 36 years of age). In 2003 the corresponding figure was 17 per cent.

Career choice Most pharmacists (45 per cent) had considered the industrial sector as a future career choice while studying for their degree (Table 1). In 2008, 192 of these (25 per cent) have had a preregistration place-

Table 1: When pharmacists first considered a career in the pharmaceutical industry

| When considered | Number | % |
|---------------------------------|--------|----|
| At school | 95 | 21 |
| Post registration | 110 | 25 |
| While studying for degree | 201 | 45 |
| During preregistration training | 35 | 8 |
| More than one/not applicable | 3 | 1 |

ment in industry (27 per cent in 2003).

Of the 444 respondents, 192 (43 per cent) had preregistration placements in industry and 251 (56 per cent) did not. More males (106) than females (84) had preregistration placements in industry (24 per cent and 19 per cent, respectively). One did not specify. For the 251 respondents who did not have preregistration placements in industry and instead spent time in other sectors of pharmacy most came from hospital (104, 41 per cent) followed closely by community (70, 28 per cent), then academia (34, 13 per cent). Some (29, 12 per cent) had worked in more than one sector.

As may be expected, as age increases the number of years spent with one company increases. However there is variation between the number of years spent in any company and the number of years spent in any one industrial pharmacist's role, and this could possibly be due to the fact that roles are ever changing and often more than one role is undertaken.

In addition to the pharmacy degree around 73 per cent of the respondents undertook some kind of further education (this has increased since 2003 when 70 per cent had completed further education). The type of additional degrees attained ranged from legal to languages. Most had a PhD, followed by an MSc or an MBA.

Pharmacists as Qualified Persons The Qualified Person (QP) role is a vital one in the pharmaceutical industry and 102 of the industrial pharmacists responding (23 per cent) are eligible to be QPs (this has decreased since 2003 when there were 185 (26 per cent). Some 119 non-QPs (45 per cent) were not interested in becoming one while 82 (19 per cent) were interested. The remainder did not select express a preference.

Seventy-two of the QPs (71 per cent) are under transitional arrangements and 22 (21 per cent) are under permanent provision.

Some 26 per cent of the QP pharmacists are female (this has increased by 7 per cent from 2003); 48 (47 per cent) were over 55 years old; 24 (23 per cent) work part time (in 2003 a similar proportion, 24 per cent, worked part time). The median age of a QP is 54 years. Transitional QPs have a higher median age than those with a permanent provision (55 and 47 years, respectively).

Salary, benefits and travel allowance

Details of gross annual income by gender and age are given Tables 2 and 3. The income figures do not include bonuses or fringe benefits.

The median salary range for female industrial pharmacists was £60,000–£70,000, an increase from 2003 where the approximate median salary was £52,500. The male median salary was £80,000–£90,000 which again saw an increase from the previous approximation of £62,500 (Table 2). These differences could perhaps be accounted for by the fact that industrial pharmacists are ageing (Table 3), that the highest earners appear to be those in their 40s and 50s and, perhaps, that the male pharmacists have worked for longer in the industrial sector.

As would be expected the salary range would increase as the level of responsibility increased. The median salary range for all industrial pharmacists was £70,000–£80,000.

Under the benefits category 74 per cent of the respondents have their retention fee paid for them. The next highest frequency of benefits was free medical insurance at 62 per cent and a contributory pension scheme at 60 per cent. All the other benefits were below 50 per cent in comparison with 2003, where the retention fee payment rate was 68 per cent, free medical insurance was 59 per cent; pension scheme provision was 58 per cent and the share option was 56 per cent (46 per cent in 2008).

Main activities: past, present and future

On entering industry most pharmacists were likely to be found working in formulation (this included formulation research and development, and drug discovery); 194 respondents (44 per cent) worked in this field of the industry on entry. At present most pharmacists are in regulatory affairs (82, 18 per cent) or formulation-related activities (83, 18 per cent) followed by quality assurance/quality control (62, 14 per cent). Other common activities being undertaken are general management (55, 12 per cent) and consultancy (56, 13 per cent).

Farrah Al-Ghita is a third-year pharmacy student at the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow. Janet A. Halliday, PhD, MRPharmS, is director of R&D at Controlled Therapeutics, East Kilbride, and a member of the IPG committee

Table 2: Breakdown of gross annual income by gender (n = 381)

| Gender | Number | Minimum salary | Lower interquartile | Median salary | Upper interquartile | Maximum salary |
|--------|--------|----------------|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Male | 231 | < £25,000 | £60,001–£70,000 | £80,001–£90,000 | £120,001–£130,000 | > £200,000 |
| Female | 149 | < £25,000 | £40,001–£50,000 | £60,001–£70,000 | £80,001–£90,000 | > £200,000 |

Table 3: Breakdown of gross annual income by age (n = 220)

| Age | Number | Minimum salary | Lower interquartile | Median salary | Upper interquartile | Maximum salary |
|----------|--------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Under 26 | 5 | < £25,000 | N/A | £25,001–£30,000 | N/A | £70,001–£80,000 |
| 26–30 | 20 | < £25,000 | £25,001–£30,000 | £35,001–£40,000 | £50,001–£60,000 | £70,001–£80,000 |
| 31–35 | 28 | < £25,000 | £25,001–£30,000 | £35,001–£40,000 | £40,001–£50,000 | £70,001–£80,000 |
| 36–40 | 38 | £30,001–£35,000 | £40,001–£50,000 | £50,001–£60,000 | £60,001–£70,000 | £70,001–£80,000 |
| 41–45 | 33 | £30,001–£35,000 | £55,000 | £50,001–£60,000 | £60,001–£70,000 | £70,001–£80,000 |
| 46–50 | 32 | £35,001–£40,000 | £50,001–£60,000 | £60,001–£70,000 | £70,001–£80,000 | £70,001–£80,000 |
| 51–55 | 22 | < £25,000 | £55,000 | £60,001–£70,000 | £60,001–£70,000 | £70,001–£80,000 |
| 56–60 | 17 | £25,001–£30,000 | £40,001–£50,000 | £50,001–£60,000 | £70,001–£80,000 | £70,001–£80,000 |
| Over 60 | 25 | < £25,000 | £60,001–£70,000 | £70,001–£80,000 | £90,001–£100,000 | > £200,000 |

Looking to the near future (one year), regulatory affairs will remain a popular choice of job. However the numbers of industrial pharmacists becoming consultants is also slowly increasing. The number of industrial pharmacists wanting to become general managers is also slowly increasing, 13 per cent of the respondents hoped to be in general management in five years' time. Eleven per cent also hope to retire within five years.

Part-time work Part-time workers were involved in all the analyses with the exception of salary data.

Since 2003 the number of part time workers has decreased from 112 (16 per cent) to 63 (14 per cent). Part-time in this case was said to be pharmacists who worked less than 30 hours per week. Of those 63, 40 (64 per cent) were female and 23 (36 per cent) were male. Although the number of female industrial pharmacists who are working part-time has decreased this cannot be seen as significant due to the low response rate. The main activities carried out by part timers are QA/QC (44 per cent), consultancy (40 per cent) and regulatory affairs (38 per cent).

The future is uncertain for most of the part-time workers but most of those who responded would want to work in QA/QC or retire.

Continuing professional development The important topic of continuing professional development, formally introduced a number of years ago, will have significance in the future. To date 310 of the industrial pharmacists responding (69 per cent) are registered with the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's CPD programme (39 per cent male and 30 per cent female) and 209 (67 per cent) have completed their CPD online (28 per cent male and 22 per cent female). Some 26 per cent of men and 21 per cent of women have registered and com-

pleted their CPD online; 15 per cent of men and 11 per cent of women have neither registered nor completed their CPD online.

Support desired In answer to a question about the needs of IPG members, respondents requested support in the areas of QP support, business and marketing, QA/QC, building relationships, CPD, career options, scientific topics (eg, new technology, biological impacts), regulations and regulatory affairs, the Industrial Pharmacists Group and the Society, preregistration placements, product updates, drug safety, sterile environments, significance of pharmacy degree/pharmacists in the industry, and quality by design and management.

There were requests for the new professional body to provide special interest groups (320 respondents), knowledge-sharing forums (263) and meetings (259) to ensure this support was available; 134 respondents selected all three options.

Opportunities for greater responsibility An opportunity scale of 1 to 10 was given to the pharmacists in order to determine how much opportunity they had for greater responsibility: 84 respondents (19 per cent, the majority in this case) marked level 8 in terms of opportunities; most of these people were also unlikely to leave their jobs.

Of this figure, however, there were twice as many of male respondents (57) than females (27). Most male industrial pharmacists at this level were also in senior management positions. Most women were in some sort of management level. Sixty-six respondents (15 per cent) marked their opportunity as being level 7 or 10; 39 (9 per cent) marked it as level 1.

Other information A survey of IPG members was published recently looking at the careers of industrial pharmacists (*PJ*, 6 September 2008, pp270–2, p277). The information for this was collected in 2005; the results do not differ markedly.

Conclusions

The high percentage of transitional QPs means that there will be a sudden drop in the number of pharmacist QPs.

The responding pharmacists in the industry considered a career in industry during their degree. This emphasises the importance of targeting the student body.

The roles of responding pharmacists changed during their career but encompassed many varied roles starting off in formulation (this includes research and development and drug discovery) then moving on to regulatory affairs, general management and consultancy.

The median salary for responding pharmacists was £70,000–£80,000.

Pharmacists responding to the survey appear to see a future in their careers, with good remuneration and a supporting benefits package. However they want continued and improved support from the Society.

Membership groups

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society has established special interest groups for community pharmacists, for veterinary pharmacists, for industrial, regulatory and technical pharmacists, for hospital pharmacists and for pharmacy academic staff.

The groups hold meetings to consider topics of interest within their own fields of practice and they provide a source of advice to the Society's Council on specialist matters.

A pharmacist whose employment does not automatically entitle him or her to join a particular group but who has a demonstrable interest in that field of practice may be admitted at the discretion of the group committee.

Details of the groups can be obtained from the Society. Contact details are given below.

Community Pharmacists Group Contact: Angela Canning, practice division (tel 020 7572 2412; e-mail angela.canning@rpsgb.org).

Veterinary Pharmacists Group Contact: Lorraine Fearon, practice division (tel 020 7572 2409; e-mail lorraine.fearon@rpsgb.org).

Industrial Pharmacists Group Contact: Angela Canning, practice division (tel 020 7572 2412; e-mail angela.canning@rpsgb.org).

Hospital Pharmacists Group Contact: Lorraine Fearon, practice division (tel 020 7572 2409; e-mail lorraine.fearon@rpsgb.org).

Academic Pharmacy Group The Contact: Damian Day, education and registration directorate (tel 020 7572 2215; e-mail damian.day.@rpsgb.org).