

# THE DEPARTMENT OF THE AMERICAN CONFERENCE OF PHARMACEUTICAL FACULTIES

IN THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION.

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The past quarter of a century has witnessed rapid changes in the character of the retail drug business and equally rapid changes in the methods of treating the sick, involving the development of biological and chemical agents of medication.

The change in methods of training pharmacists in colleges of pharmacy to meet the new conditions has not been so rapid. In fact the tendency has been so strongly against the introduction of anything new into the pharmaceutical curriculum that whatever criticism one hears of our courses of to-day is directed against the extreme conservatism of our educational institutions and not against any attempt to modernize the courses. There is now an unmistakable demand to make such changes or additions in the courses offered as will fit students of pharmacy better for the work that is expected of them when they take up their business and professional activities.

The original extreme opposition to the high school graduation requirement and to the three-year pharmacy course is happily a thing of the past and it is now only a matter of a few years when minimum educational requirements for pharmacists will be higher throughout the country than even the most sanguine considered possible a decade ago.

There are still a large number of pharmacists who feel that the training *they* received was all-sufficient even though they will freely admit that there is much of the chemistry, pharmacodynamics and even pharmacy involved in recent revisions of the U. S. Pharmacopœia and National Formulary which they do not understand. They cite the merchandising trend of the retail drug business as ample proof that no further professional training is necessary but insist that more attention should be given to business administration. They forget that the pharmaceutical training which they received at college, fifteen or twenty years ago and more, was often augmented by thorough training in a pharmacy under the apprentice system or a modification of it. The drug stores where students of pharmacy can now obtain real professional training are few in number, not because there is a dearth of professional work, necessarily, but because the tendency to departmentize drug stores has had the effect of relegating the student clerk to the sales counters where he can earn his pay, and leaving the compounding and dispensing to registered pharmacists or assistant pharmacists. The installation of modern business methods in the retail pharmacy, practically requires the elimination of the training features of the store. It is expected of the colleges that they assume this responsibility and they should. But it is manifestly unfair to expect the college to give the same training in two years which was formerly acquired in at least four and sometimes six years, based on the combined college and drug-store experience requirement.

That there should be a difference of opinion as to the scope of the training to

be given in the enlarged college course and what drug store training should be required in addition, is but natural. We have on the one side the extreme view that all necessary training for the practice of pharmacy may be acquired at a college of pharmacy as exemplified by the present regulations governing the practice of pharmacy in the state of Virginia. Realizing its great responsibility under these regulations, the College of Pharmacy in that state provides prescription experience in connection with hospital dispensaries and trade experience in a practice drug store in charge of a successful retail pharmacist.

On the other side we have the recently promulgated regulation of the New York Regents to the effect that applicants for admission to the pharmacy courses in New York Colleges must have had two years of drug-store experience in addition to being high school graduates, to take effect in 1926. This does not affect the total experience requirement of four years necessary for registration as a pharmacist in that state, but two years of experience in a drug store must have been had before the beginning of the college course. Requirements elsewhere will range between these extremes and it is not unlikely that experience will have a tendency to modify them as time goes on.

Some consideration must be given to the effect of radical changes upon established customs and institutions. There is the reciprocity situation, for example. Much excellent work has been done to build up reciprocity agreements between the various states and in the building of these agreements there has been a raising of educational standards all along the line. By well-directed, coöperative effort we can keep up our present rate of progress and at the same time preserve that which has been built up so laboriously.

The matter of the so-called three-day a week course is the subject of regulation on the part of some boards at present. Those who have studied the situation impartially have seen the handwriting on the wall for some time in this connection. It is becoming increasingly difficult for the colleges to take over the responsibilities referred to earlier in this article and arrange a schedule satisfactory to students and instructors alike, on the plan of giving instruction on alternate days and assuming that the student works in a drug store on the other days. There are stumbling blocks in the way of changing from the three-day to the five- or six-day plan but these can be overcome and will be overcome in a few years. Pharmacists who employ students will have to be educated to the change and colleges now planned and built for the three-day schedule will have to enlarge their facilities. A reasonable time must be allotted for this change because it involves the altering of a custom of long years' standing and it is not nearly as vital as the high school and three-year course requirement. In fact the tendency in engineering schools is to alternate college work and shop practice throughout the course. The present three-day alternating pharmacy course is not exactly comparable because the pharmaceutical institutions exercise no supervision over the practical drug-store work of the student. We are groping for the best solutions to very important problems and some experimental work is necessary. Pharmaceutical historians of the future will place the proper value on these experiments. No one is competent to judge them accurately during a period of transition such as we are now going through. A spirit of mutual helpfulness is therefore a prime essential for progress in the right direction.