**Title:**

**Transition from undergraduate education to early careers practice: preparedness for dealing with ethical and professional dilemmas in practice**

M. Allinson, P. Black and S. White

Keele University, Keele, UK

**Introductory line:**

Empirical evidence is lacking regarding transition to community pharmacy practice;(1) this study explores one aspect of transition, dealing with ethical dilemmas.

**Aim and objectives:**

The aim of this study was to explore the perspectives of alumni from one UK School of Pharmacy on how prepared they felt to deal with ethical problems during their pre-registration year and early careers practice.

**Research design and methodology:**

A semi-structured interview schedule was developed based on current literature and the aim of the study. This qualitative study was part of a larger investigation. Interviewees were recruited in 2015 via an invitation included in a questionnaire that was sent to all alumni who had graduated in the previous three years, were resident in the UK, and had provided contact addresses. Additional participants were recruited from final year students, for interview in their pre-registration year. Interviews were conducted in a variety of settings, lasted 50-120 minutes, and were audiotaped. Verbatim transcripts were coded and analysed using framework analysis.[1] University Research Ethics Committee approval was obtained.

**Results:**

Nine pre-registration trainees (PRTs) and nine pharmacists (up to 2 years qualified), of varying ethnicities, were interviewed. Five were male. Two main themes emerged.

Theme 1: ‘courage and concern in practice’. Interviewees reported putting the welfare of patients first, being willing to break the law when justified, e.g.*“…the patient is the most important thing so if you decide to go with the law, what’s going to happen to that patient if they don’t have their medicine?”* (Pharmacist 1). Interviewees did, however, also describe being fearful of potential consequences of their professional decisions, e.g. *“…it's a balancing act between what's best for the patient and whether you're going to be called in front of a disciplinary committee … it is stressful.”* (Pharmacist 7).

The moral courage to challenge poor practice was also reported, particularly by pharmacists. PRTs, however, reported not always having the courage to speak up when faced with it.

Theme 2: ‘learning through practice and continuing professional development (CPD)’. Interviewees felt they needed further support to deal with ethical dilemmas after graduating and were willing to learn through CPD. They reported learning from positive role models particularly valuable, including more experienced pharmacists or their peers, but mentioned negative role models more frequently, including pre-registration tutors. Methods of learning varied, with some reporting observation or face-to-face discussions, and others using social media platforms e.g. WhatsApp Messaging.

**Discussion/Conclusion:**

This study suggested that the welfare of patients was generally given priority to legal considerations, and that pharmacists displayed moral courage since they were aware of the potential consequences of their actions. It also found that, in the presence of negative role models and observation of poor practice, PRTs learned ‘what not to do’. The study suggests a need for improvements in tutor training to avoid poor practice being accepted as normal and not challenged.[2] There was a risk of social desirability bias since MA, a lecturer at Keele University, conducted the interviews, but this relationship appeared to engender a good rapport with open dialogue.

**References:**

1. Magola E, Willis SC and Schafheutle EI. (2018) What can community pharmacy learn from the experiences of transition to practice for novice doctors and nurses? A narrative review, International Journal of Pharmacy Practice, 26, pp. 4-15