From Student to Specialty: Mapping Your Career Path

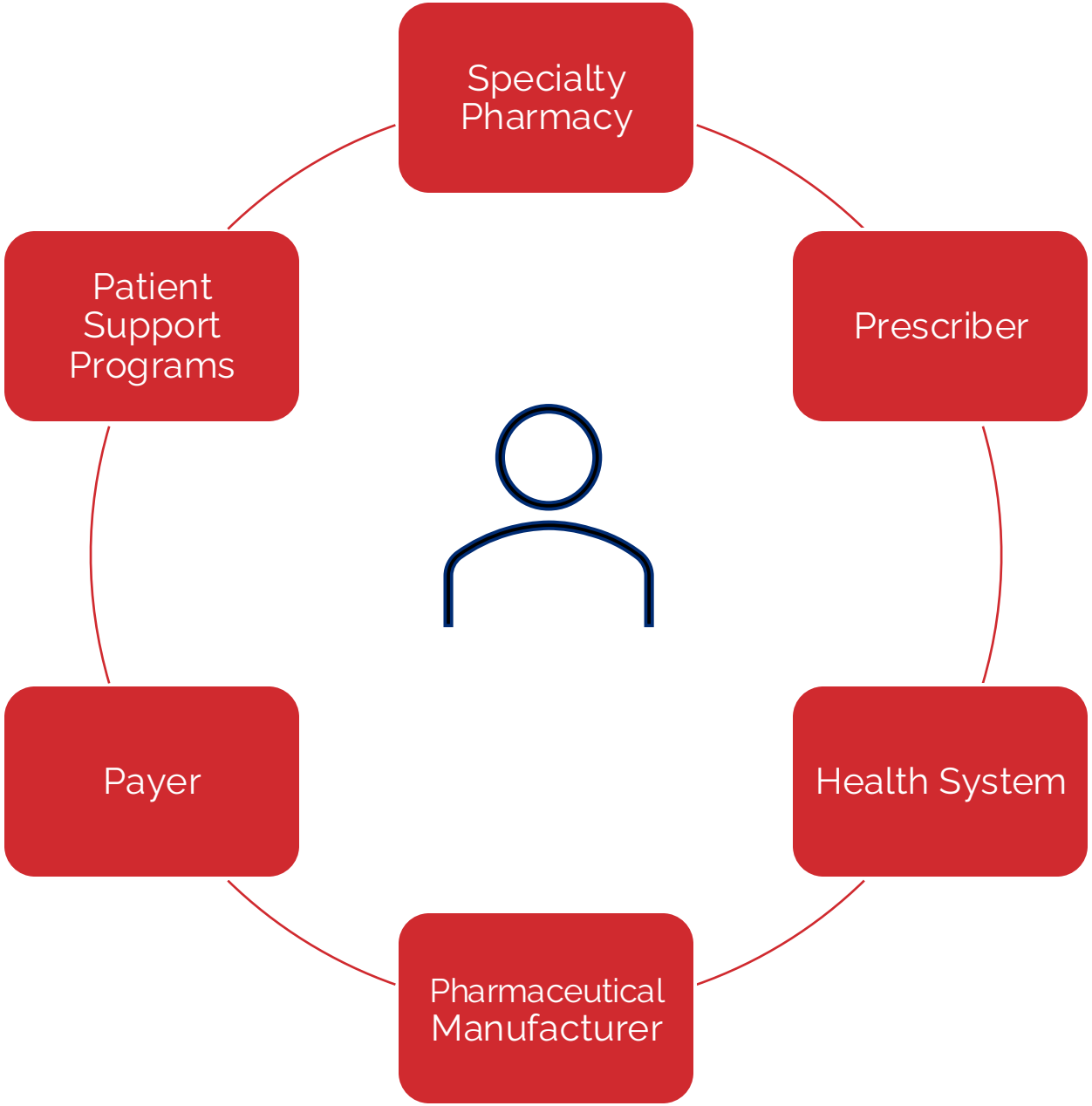
Learning Objectives

1. Describe the major career pathways within specialty pharmacy, including community, health system, industry, infusion, and payer settings.
2. Compare key responsibilities, work environments, and career opportunities across specialty pharmacy practice settings.
3. Evaluate personal interests, strengths, and career goals to determine potential specialty pharmacy career fits.
4. Develop an action plan for exploring specialty pharmacy careers during pharmacy school through networking, leadership, experiential learning, and professional development.

Specialty Pharmacy Ecosystem

Many Organizations, One Patient Journey

Careers Throughout the Patient Journey



Specialty Pharmacy Roles Compared

Community, Health System, Industry, Infusion, and Payer

Specialty Pharmacy Practice Settings

Community

Independent specialty pharmacies servicing patients

CVS Specialty, Walgreens Specialty

Health System

Specialty pharmacies integrated into clinics and healthcare systems

Duke University Hospital, University of Chicago Medical Center

Industry

Drug manufacturers developing specialty medications

Pfizer, AbbVie

Infusion

Independent specialty pharmacies providing access to specialty medications administered via IV

Nufactor

Payer

Health Plans and Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBMs) providing patient access to specialty medications

Humana, Express Scripts

Community Specialty Pharmacy

Daily Responsibilities:

- Call Center
  - Patient counseling, adherence and lab monitoring, prescriber collaboration
- Fulfillment Pharmacy
  - Manage cold chain shipping and logistics to ensure product integrity for mail order dispensing

Typical Schedule

- Mostly Monday – Friday with some weekend and evening coverage
- Remote and hybrid opportunities available

Good Fit for Pharmacists Who Enjoy

- Patient interaction and relationship building
- A balance of clinical and operational work
- Solving access and insurance barriers

Skills that Matter

- Communication
- Time management
- Problem solving

Health System Specialty Pharmacy

Daily Responsibilities:

- Call Center and/or Fulfillment responsibilities similar to Community
- Utilize health system's EMR to monitor labs and clinical assessments that can be utilized for prior authorization support and patient counseling
- Coordinate closely with nurses and physicians within the health system

Typical Schedule

- Mostly Monday – Friday with some weekend and evening coverage
- Remote and hybrid opportunities available
- On-site clinic practice

Good Fit for Pharmacists Who Enjoy

- Direct clinical care and/or specializing in a specific disease state
- Multidisciplinary teamwork

Skills that Matter

- Evidence-based medicine
- Communication

Industry Careers

Medical Affairs

- Provider education, clinical presentations, and clinical documentation development

Market Access

- Health Economics and Outcomes Research (HEOR), payer engagement, coverage strategy

Commercial

- Manage specialty pharmacy accounts

Patient Support Programs

- HUB services, financial assistance programs, patient education

Field Reimbursement

- Collaborate with provider's offices to navigate insurance barriers such as prior authorizations

Typical Schedule

- Weekday business hours
- Remote/hybrid with potential for travel

Good Fit for Pharmacists Who Enjoy

- Problem-solving, and cross-functional teamwork
- Project-based workload
- Large-scale healthcare impact

Skills that Matter

- Strategic thinking
- Scientific communication
- Presentation skills

Infusion Specialty Pharmacy

Daily Responsibilities:	Typical Schedule	Good Fit for Pharmacists Who Enjoy	Skills that Matter
• Determine appropriate medication use and treatment plans by assessing labs, monitoring therapeutic outcomes, and weighing safety considerations • Verify sterile compounding preparations and ensure necessary infusion supplies are provided • Coordinate medication delivery to align with patient's infusion schedule	• Mostly Monday – Friday with some weekend and evening coverage • Remote and hybrid opportunities available	• Coordinating complex patient care • Biologics, immunology, rare disease, or infectious disease	• Sterile product knowledge • Attention to detail • Clinical decision making

Payer and Managed Care Careers

Daily Responsibilities

Coverage policy review
Prior authorization programs
Clinical guideline development
Specialty drug management
Population health initiatives

Typical Schedule

- Mostly Monday – Friday with some weekend and evening coverage
- Remote and hybrid opportunities available

Good Fit for Pharmacists Who Enjoy

- Problem solving
- Data-driven decision making

Skills that Matter

- Data interpretation
- Clinical evaluation
- Analytical thinking

How to Choose the Right Path Early

Strategies for Determining Future Careers

Finding Your Best Fit

Which Characteristics Matter Most to You?

- Patient interaction
- Clinical application
- Business focus
- Travel requirements
- Location
- Residency/fellowship requirements
- Team dynamic and collaboration
- Career advancement opportunities
- Work hours

Early Exploration of Specialty Pharmacy

Use student opportunities to test what you enjoy and what you don't

Student Organizations

- Leadership positions
- Event and initiative planning responsibilities

Professional Conferences

- Challenge yourself to network and make connections with pharmacists

Rotations

- Voice your interest in specialty pharmacy early and ask for projects tailored to your interest

Research

Internships

Building Your Personal Career Map

Goal is to better understand:

- What motivates you
- Where your strengths fit

Reflection Questions:

- Do I enjoy direct patient care?
- Do I prefer clinical or business-focused work?
- Do I enjoy teaching and presenting to others?
- Am I energized by data and analytics?
- What type of impact do I want to make?

Conclusion

Your career path is a journey, not a single decision

Many pharmacists move between practice settings throughout their careers.

Focus less on finding opportunities that help you learn, grow, and discover what energizes you.

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Thank You