A Short History of the Degree Programs at the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy

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Although a *six-year* PharmD program seemed like a bold new initiative in the 1960s, the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy (PCP) actually required roughly the same amount of time to qualify for its original Graduate in Pharmacy degree (PhG) in 1821.[1]

To earn a PhG, students had to attend college for two years–but they also had to complete a minimum four-year apprenticeship with a respectable druggist by the time of graduation. Students usually accelerated the process by attending college in the evenings during the last two years of their apprenticeship. As a result of the daytime apprenticeship schedules, PCP operated primarily as a night school during the first seventy-five years of its existence (1821-1895).[2]

In addition to switching to a daytime schedule in 1895, PCP also replaced the PhG with a pair of new *three-year* diploma programs: the PD (Doctor in Pharmacy) and the PhC (Pharmaceutical Chemist). The latter degree catered to medical students and pharmaceutical manufacturers who did not need an apprenticeship to graduate. The pharmacy degree, on the other hand, still required completion of a minimum four-year apprenticeship, in addition to the extended college course.[3]

The extra college year rankled some pharmacy students, especially since there were no prerequisite laws requiring a pharmacy degree to practice. Of an estimated 20,000 matriculated students attending PCP during its first hundred years only 7,500 graduated and earned diplomas. That is still a good number considering that, as late as January 1, 1921, only seventeen (of forty-eight) states had prerequisite pharmacy laws; the first being passed by New York in 1905.[4]

Due to frequent complaints about the mandatory third year of college (and stiff competition from other schools that still offered a two-year pharmacy degree) PCP revived the two-year PhG in 1915. At the same time, PCP also introduced a new "3rd year" *postgraduate* PharD (Doctor of Pharmacy), and "4th year" BSc (Bachelor of Science).[5] Confusion intensified, as pharmacy schools across the country experimented with various new diploma forms in their search for a proper twentieth century credential.

With an eye to the future, PCP amended its charter in 1920 to create four separate "Bachelor of Science" programs in Pharmacy, Chemistry, Bacteriology, and Pharmacognosy. The new four-year BSc programs launched in the fall of 1921 in concert with the school's centennial celebration.[6] PCP also seized the moment to change its name to the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science (PCPS).

Over the next fourteen years PCPS phased out a variety of antiquated certificate and diploma forms, including the diehard PhG, which had increased from two years to three years in 1925. The college *permanently* retired the PhG in 1934, after which the four-year BSc degrees

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comprised the undergraduate options.[7] Students adding one year of postgraduate study after the BSc now earned the MSc (Master in Science) degree; and two more additional years of study led to the DSc (Doctor of Science).[8] All vestiges of the old four-year apprenticeship requirement disappeared, effectively replaced by a preliminary four-year high school diploma. Practical experience now *followed* graduation, as part of the licensure process. This general standardization of the curriculum ushered in a period of improvement and stability that lasted until the end of World War II, when the Pharmaceutical Survey of 1946-49 recommended the creation of a new six-year program leading to the PharmD degree.[9] These recommendations appealed strongly to both the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP) and American Council on Pharmaceutical Education (ACPE). Although the University of Southern California responded almost immediately with the creation of the nation's first modern PharmD program in 1950, nearly all the other pharmacy schools in the country opted to wait and see.[10]

Dr. Ivor Griffith, President and Dean of Pharmacy at PCPS, viewed the evolving situation with particular caution and prescience:

> After years of expensive studies…the original program of improving the curriculum within the four years became something totally different, namely, extending it to five or possibly six years…It is proposed and ready to be acted upon (by AACP) that accredited colleges of pharmacy will mandatorily go on a five year plan…This is only the first step in establishing a six-year undergraduate course in Pharmacy.[11]

As Griffith predicted, AACP set a deadline at its annual meeting in 1954 for the implementation of a mandatory five-year BS in Pharmacy by April 1, 1965. The decision was quickly ratified by the American Pharmaceutical Association (APhA) and several other organizations.[12]

PCPS duly announced the birth of its five-year BSc program in the summer of 1960, but, by this time, a handful of other schools had already decided to go *exclusively* with the PharmD.[13] To keep its bases covered, PCPS added an *optional* Post-Baccalaureate PharmD several years later, announcing that:

> In the new programs of health care now being developed in the United States, pharmacists will be expected to serve–along with physicians, nurses, and other medical service personnel–as members of "health teams" [in] hospitals, clinics, and other institutions…. The consensus [in] pharmaceutical education is that a six-year curriculum leading to the professional degree of Doctor of Pharmacy is required to provide this competence. For two years our faculty studied curriculums meeting these objectives and last summer formulated one which… is now being evaluated by [the] Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. If the proposed curriculum is approved… it will be inaugurated this fall. It is not intended, however, that the new program will replace the present five-year curriculum.[14]

The Post-Baccalaureate PharmD introduced by PCPS in 1967 was one of the first in the country and it proved highly successful. As the debate continued, more and more pharmacy schools jumped on board with their own "post-baccalaureate" plans. To help finally settle the issue, APhA created a Task Force on Pharmacy Education in 1981 to study the "nature and title" of the degree awarded to entry-level pharmacists. Their final report, delivered in 1984, endorsed the six-year PharmD as the "sole entry level for the practice of pharmacy."[15] Supporters of this initiative faced a serious problem, however. In 1984 only seven pharmacy schools had pledged sole allegiance to the PharmD, while twenty-nine schools offered *both* programs (BSc & PharmD), and thirty-seven still relied *exclusively* on the five-year BSc.[16] As a result, the Task Force added a caveat to their final report suggesting "that the five-year BS entry level not be abandoned until, and if**,** future developments so warrant."[17]

PCPS reacted to the confusion by creating a task force of its own. Recommendations delivered in March 1989 called for the *continuation* of the five-year BS in Pharmacy and the *elimination* of the post-baccalaureate PharmD (limited to fifteen students per year), in favor of an *optional entry-level program* that handled more students.[18] Just a few months later in September, however, ACPE dropped a bombshell, when it published a "Declaration of Intent" to make accreditation *dependent* on the adoption of the PharmD as the *one-and-only* professional degree—perhaps as early as the year 2000.[19]

Instead of ending the debate, ACPE's "declaration" intensified the controversy. Meanwhile, PCPS proceeded with the formulation of its own educational plan. The need for clinical training and the issue of professional parity always topped the list of emerging trends justifying the six-year PharmD curriculum:

One important issue needs to be addressed openly. Among members of the health care team–including physicians, osteopathic physicians, dentists, optometrists, podiatrists–only nurses and pharmacists are not routinely awarded a professional doctoral degree. This may seem a trivial distinction, but in practice it can be a real discriminator; social scientists refer to it as "social distance." Doctoral credentials may have a major positive impact on the pharmacy profession and the advancement of peer relationships among pharmacists and other members of the health care team.[20]

In the summer of 1992, PCPS finally settled on the implementation of what it proudly hailed as "The Philadelphia Plan," scheduled for launch in the fall of 1994.[21] The plan satisfied three key objectives: the introduction of an entry-level PharmD program; the preservation of the five-year BS in pharmacy (as an alternative path to licensure); and the creation of a four-year BS in Pharmaceutical Sciences for related degree programs or career paths that did not require pharmacy licensure.

All three programs were designed to share a common curricular stem for the first three years, after which the students declared their intentions. The "Philadelphia Plan" seemed like a good solution, but ACPE's "Declaration of Intent" cast a long shadow over the preparations. Once ACPE finally solidified its position on accreditation in 1993, PCPS decided to go *all PharmD*, and convert "The Philadelphia Plan" into a retirement program for the five-year BS in Pharmacy.[22] Under the circumstances, PCPS did everything it could to maximize the options for its students and alumni.

The new entry-level PharmD program arrived on schedule in the fall of 1994, along with a "Transitional PharmD" which allowed selected third-, fourth-, and fifth-year BS students to find places in the new entry-level program. An additional "Flexible PharmD" (a revamped post-baccalaureate PharmD) allowed current practitioners and alumni to upgrade their credentials.[23]

Accreditation for the BS in Pharmacy at PCPS ended in 2001 (and everywhere else in 2004).[24] Admission to the program stopped in 1996 but students already enrolled continued to graduate over the next five years. The numbers speak for themselves. In 1996 there were forty-five PharmD recipients (including the last of the Post-Baccalaureate PharmD graduates) and 190 BS in Pharmacy graduates. By comparison, in 2001 there were 153 PharmD recipients but only twenty-three BS in Pharmacy graduates, the last of their kind at the college.[25]

From that moment on, the PharmD reigned supreme at PCPS.

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