

To whom it may concern,

I am a pharmacy proprietor as well as an accredited consultant pharmacist and a pharmacy preceptor. As a health professional, I firmly believe that I am undervalued. The degree of consumer engagement that occurs in my pharmacy and the impact on my patients is not appreciated and certainly not adequately remunerated.

What I feel is the greatest barrier to my profession receiving the credit and remuneration it deserves is the impact of retail focused pharmacy chains and aggressive discounters. The emphasis on low prices and prescription volume is not a formula that delivers a great degree of pharmacist access and optimal delivery of services. I can give the government a myriad of suggestions on how to improve pharmacy. But it all counts for little if pharmacies are allowed to push script volume per pharmacist, pharmacist access and the quality of service provision to the brink (and beyond) of what might be considered ethical or professional. This is where reform of the industry has to start. The government needs to stop dancing around what is universally known about the impact of these types of pharmacies on our industry.

As an accredited pharmacist I have to sit an written exam every 3 years to maintain my accreditation. This provides me with a constant incentive to update and refresh my knowledge. As a preceptor, my association with some dozen or more interns over the last 20 years has also served to keep my knowledge at its optimum. Yet I am remunerated and regarded by the government as the same species as a pharmacist whose knowledge has not been refreshed or tested for what might be years or decades. I would like to see a more robust system that requires an interview and perhaps a written examination of some sort (on line multiple choice - perhaps every 3-4 years) to ascertain pharmacists' competence and direct continuing education in a more meaningful manner.

Effective reform is not easy. But we must address the obvious issues facing the profession. The two issues I have raised above are in my opinion the most salient at the current time. If we raise the bar of what it means to be a pharmacist in terms of our knowledge base and the way we practice, surely this will benefit all of the stakeholders, not least of which is the unsuspecting consumer.

Kind regards,

Pharmacy Proprietor