
5-15-2023

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 15, 2023

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How COVID-19 Changed Healthcare Education

CEDARVILLE, OHIO -- It's been years since something shocked health care like COVID-19. As a result, [pharmacy](#) educators, including those in the Cedarville University [School of Pharmacy](#), have adjusted their education structure to better prepare students for the forever-changed work environment that awaits them.

COVID required the healthcare industry to adapt to new methods of care. One adjustment is the move toward telemedicine and a greater emphasis on online drug distribution. These changes to the more traditional method of being a pharmacist have also caused pharmacy educators to realign their teaching methods.

"It's been a chaotic time," said Dr. [Zach Jenkins](#), associate professor of [pharmacy](#) practice and director of experiential programs. "We have had to change not only how we teach our students on campus, but off campus as well."

A key component of students earning their [Doctor of Pharmacy](#) degree is hands-on education. Students in the program will become licensed interns in Ohio, or another state, during their first year in the professional program. This allows students to gain off-campus learning opportunities in a variety of pharmacies and hospitals.

"At first, many experiential clinical sites didn't want students present for liability concerns in the first few months of the pandemic," Jenkins continued. "Now, they want them more than ever with lots of health care professionals transitioning out of the field or to new roles. The career options for students upon graduation are plentiful."

The pharmacy industry has also had to respond to the overflow of medical research data in an unprecedented age of information accessibility.

"Before COVID-19, there were over 10,000 medical research articles published daily. This skyrocketed during the pandemic. Pharmacists, especially those in education, are called upon to answer questions the public may not be able to answer themselves," said Jenkins. "We have had to double down on teaching our students how to evaluate the validity of studies by identifying potential biases, design flaws, analysis methodology, and contextualizing research findings. We can't simply look at things in a vacuum and stop at surface conclusions. We also need to be willing to shift perspectives when new and valid evidence emerges. If we can raise pharmacists that consider these things, we can help to fill in the information gap."

Ultimately, the COVID pandemic has pushed pharmacists into the forefront of the healthcare industry. While pharmacists are empowered to make a difference, COVID has also made the job more challenging.

“Mental health for healthcare workers has been a great concern in the aftermath of COVID,” said Jenkins. “A lot of people have changed industries because they are worn out from front-line patient care. Part of what we are trying to do is encourage our students to stay in the front lines, while also checking on their own and others' mental health. I think we have what the industry needs: resilient leaders that are willing to help not only patients but each other.”

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 5,082 [undergraduate](#), [graduate](#), and [dual-enrolled](#) high school students in more than 175 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is one of the largest private universities in Ohio, recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, including the [Doctor of Pharmacy](#) program, high graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings, and the #4 national ranking by the Wall Street Journal for student engagement. For more information about the University, visit cedarville.edu.

Written by Alex Boesch

Photo caption:

A Cedarville Doctor of Pharmacy Student works in the lab.

Photos by Scott Huck, Cedarville University