

Pharmacists Through a Public Lens: Understanding Trust, Role Recognition, and Support for Prescribing

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Background:

- Patients visit their community pharmacies almost twice as often as they visit their physicians¹.
- Pharmacists have consistently ranked among the most trusted professions in the U.S. in Gallup surveys².
- Oversea studies have found that Pharmacists are still widely perceived as medication retailers rather than clinical providers^{3,4}.
- The extent to which the American public recognizes pharmacists' expanded roles, trusts them in those roles, and supports further expansion is not well-documented.

Methods:

- Single-site survey (40-items) administered electronically via Qualtrics.
- 405 consenting adults recruited at a science museum located in a metropolitan area (June - December 2024).
- Analyzed using descriptive statistics and association analyses.

Figure 1: How likely are you to trust a pharmacist to provide you with each of the following health care services?

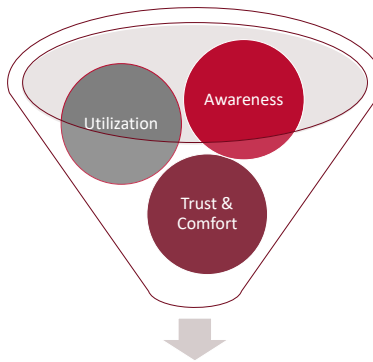
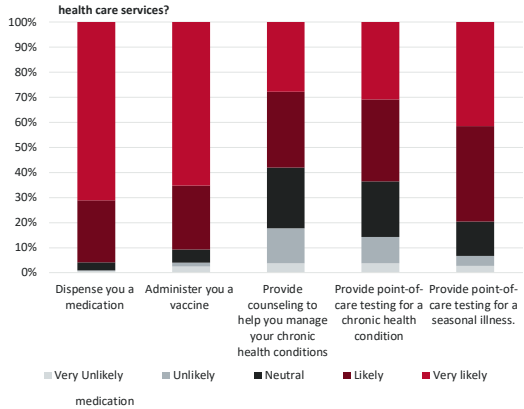
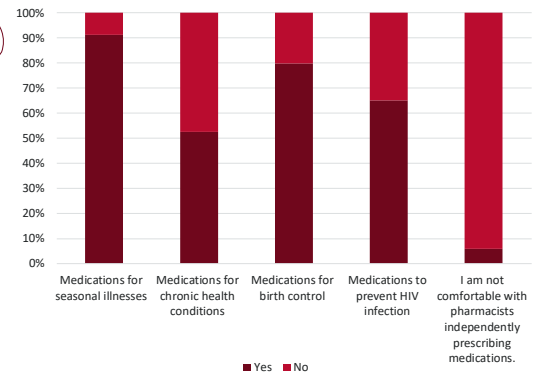


Figure 2: I feel comfortable with a pharmacist prescribing...



Results:

- Over 90% of participants were aware that pharmacists dispense medications and administer vaccinations.
- 38.2% of respondents were aware that pharmacists prescribe medications, and 34.4% were unaware that pharmacists provide point-of-care testing for chronic health conditions.
- 53.5% of participants spoke with a pharmacist about a medication in the past 12 months.
- Within the past 12 months 12.2% of respondents received a healthcare service other than vaccination and/or dispensing of a medication from a pharmacist.
- 79.6% were likely or very likely to trust a pharmacist to provide point-of-care for seasonal illnesses, 63.6% would trust a pharmacist for point-of-care testing for chronic conditions, and 58.1% would trust a pharmacist to help manage chronic conditions (Figure 1).
- 87.0% of respondents supported pharmacists having an expanded role in patient education and 90.8% supported healthcare teams including a pharmacist to manage patient medications.
- Respondents broadly supported pharmacists independently prescribing across multiple medication categories (Figure 2).

Conclusion:

- Despite high trust, only approximately 1 in 8 respondents utilized pharmacist services beyond dispensing and vaccination, highlighting an untapped opportunity to expand utilization of pharmacist-provided care.
- Low awareness of expanded services, including prescribing and chronic disease testing, indicates an opportunity to improve public health outreach.
- Public support for pharmacist prescribing spans multiple medication categories, indicating overall openness to scope-of-practice expansion. Support is highest for seasonal illnesses (91.2%) and is lowest for chronic conditions (52.5%), suggesting the potential for a phased policy approach informed by public readiness.

1) Berenbrok, L. A., Gabriel, N., Coley, K. C., & Hernandez, I. (2020). Evaluation of frequency of encounters with primary care physicians vs visits to community pharmacies among Medicare beneficiaries. *JAMA Network Open*, 3(7), e209132. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.9132>

2) Saad, L. (2025, January 13). *Americans' ratings of U.S. professions stay historically low*. Gallup. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/655106/americans-ratings-professions-stay-historically-low.aspx>

3) Majchrowska, A., Bogusz, R., Nowakowska, L., Pawlikowski, J., Piątkowski, W., & Wichetek, M. (2019). Public perception of the range of roles played by professional pharmacists. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 16(15), 2787. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16152787>

4) Akhtar, N., Hasan, S. S., & Badar, Z. U. D. (2022). Evaluation of general practice pharmacists' role by key stakeholders in England and Australia. *Journal of Pharmacy and Health Services Research*, 13(1), 31–40. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jphsr/mc002>