Stakeholders’ perspective towards formal preceptor preparation for the Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) programme in Thailand

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Background: WHO, UNESCO and FIPEd are concerned about the lack of quantity and quality of pharmacy preceptors in many developing countries who changed to PharmD programme. Pharmacy education in Thailand started moving to all PharmD programme from 2008. The new PharmD curriculum requires 2,000 hours of practice training, a four-fold increase as compared to BPharm programme. This study aims to explore stakeholders’ perspective towards formal preceptor preparation for the PharmD programme in Thailand.

Method: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 policy makers, 33 pharmacy practitioners, 14 health care providers, 25 educators and 13 students from August-October, 2013 in Thailand. The data were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim and analysed using an inductive thematic analysis.

Results: Stakeholders felt there were benefits for institutions if they are offered as training sites (eg contributing to pharmacy profession, updating preceptors’ knowledge and skills, having highly competent academic members who are able to empower preceptors and enhance training sites and opportunity to recruit good performance pharmacy students). However, majority of the interviewees had common concerns regarding the insufficient quantity and quality of preceptors. Stakeholders’ perceived barriers towards formal preceptor preparation, such as the workload (eg high routine workload of the preceptors, lack of time/money/management staff/space), inadequate role models, the need for more recognition and support from administrators regarding preceptors’ roles, training sites requiring standardisation and quality assurance, the need to put in place a preceptor development programme and the establishing of an active Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)/long term commitment between training sites and universities.

Conclusion: This is the first study to highlight the challenges of preparing training sites during the significant transition in Thai pharmacy education. Faculties, provider sites, pharmacy professional organisations and regulatory bodies need to collaborate to overcome these challenges.