

What does our NHS hospital staffing structure look like? Trends and implications

S Sanders NHS Pharmacy Education & Development Committee

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Introduction

The NHS Pharmacy Education & Development Committee has undertaken a Staffing Survey of NHS staff for several years. Almost complete data collection is achieved by strong NHS pharmacy networks at a senior level.

Objectives

- To collect and collate complete and accurate data on pharmacy staffing establishments and vacancy rates for all NHS trusts across England and Wales on 31 May 2007
- To compare these data with those collected in previous surveys
- To consider recruitment & retention issues based on trends, use of agency staff and vacancy rates
- To utilise the data locally for workforce planning purposes, including consideration of the numbers of trainees required

Method

- The National NHS Hospital Pharmacy Staffing Establishment and Vacancy Survey 2007 included all NHS acute and mental health trusts in England and Wales
- A questionnaire was sent to the Chief Pharmacist in each NHS trust. Non-responders were followed-up with repeated requests. The survey included all pharmacy staff, except pre-registration trainee pharmacists, as these are often not included in staffing establishments
- The survey asked for point prevalence data on 31 May 2007, and is comparable with similar data collected in previous years
- This survey considered posts available (the staffing establishment), and those occupied by permanent or agency/locum staff. It also asked for information on posts known to be under threat because of reorganisation and/or NHS financial pressures

Results

- 227 NHS hospital pharmacies responded out of 238 identified and surveyed (95.38%)
- A further 19 trusts do not have a pharmacy department but have pharmacy services provided via a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with a neighbouring acute NHS trust. All 11 non-responders were in England
- The response rate was the same as the response rate achieved in May 2006

There has been:

- a slight increase in staffing establishments for pharmacists
- decreases in staffing establishments for pharmacy technicians and pharmacy assistants
- The number of posts under threat lies at 1%, a drop from 2% in 2006

Skill Mix The overall proportion of senior, middle and junior pharmacists and senior and junior pharmacy technicians had changed very little from 2006. However, there is some noteworthy geographical variation.

Geographical Variation There is considerable geographical variation in vacancy rates and proportions of staff at different grades - **Table 1 (Pharmacists)** and **Table 2 (Pharmacy Technicians)**.

Vacancy Rates With the exception of junior pharmacy technicians, the percentage of vacant posts has increased for all grades of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians since May 2006.

Pharmacists

- Four SHAs have a Band 6 vacancy rate of over 20%
- 17.22% of Band 6 posts are vacant
- 18.03% of Band 7 posts are vacant

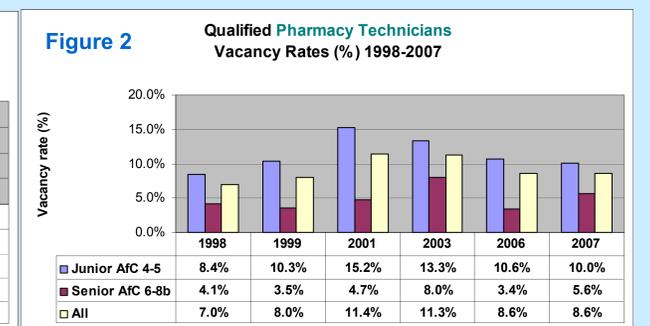
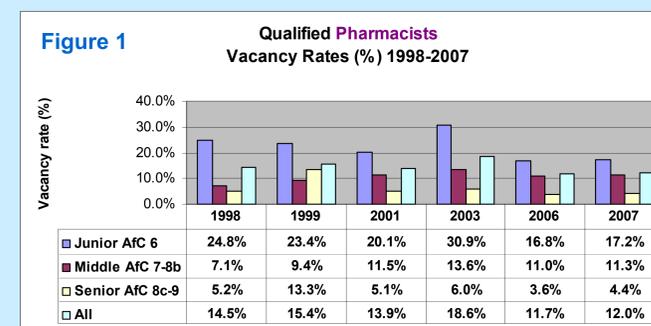
Pharmacy Technicians

- 10.89% of Band 4 posts are vacant
- 9.41% of Band 5 posts are vacant

The vacancy rates over time are shown in **Figures 1 & 2**

Table 1	Senior pharmacists Afc 8c-9			Middle pharmacists Afc 7-8b			Junior pharmacists Afc 6			Total pharmacists		
	Established posts WTE)	Posts occupied (permanent) Vacancy Rate %		Established posts WTE)	Posts occupied (permanent) Vacancy Rate %		Established posts WTE)	Posts occupied (permanent) Vacancy Rate %		Established posts WTE)	Posts occupied (permanent) Vacancy Rate %	
North East SHA	25.67	23.58	8.14%	197.61	164.41	16.80%	71.29	58.28	18.25%	294.57	246.27	16.4%
North West SHA	75.51	70.35	6.83%	381.32	334.66	12.24%	173.49	144.93	16.46%	630.32	549.94	12.75%
Yorkshire & The Humber SHA	40.08	38.82	3.14%	305.82	265.72	13.11%	84.69	71.75	15.28%	430.59	376.29	12.61%
East Midlands SHA	26.14	26.14	0.00%	228.09	207.91	8.85%	85.88	77.29	10.00%	340.11	311.34	8.46%
West Midlands SHA	32.70	30.70	6.12%	207.59	187.35	9.75%	75.60	53.31	29.48%	315.89	271.36	14.10%
East of England SHA	63.51	59.13	6.90%	277.01	235.25	15.08%	113.22	96.04	15.17%	453.74	390.42	13.96%
London SHA	166.16	158.26	4.85%	792.29	710.26	10.35%	379.49	326.45	13.98%	1,337.94	1,194.97	10.69%
South East Coast SHA	30.36	29.90	1.52%	212.21	196.78	7.27%	85.41	62.04	27.36%	327.98	288.72	11.97%
South Central SHA	30.94	30.89	0.16%	249.65	211.23	15.39%	83.76	63.52	24.16%	364.35	305.64	16.11%
South West SHA	30.21	30.21	0.00%	246.37	219.36	10.96%	95.30	74.09	22.26%	371.88	323.66	12.97%
Wales	46.71	45.21	3.21%	274.02	257.76	5.93%	54.90	50.90	7.29%	375.63	353.87	5.79%
TOTAL	567.99	543.19	4.37%	3,371.98	2,90.69	11.31%	1,303.03	1,078.60	17.22%	5,243.00	4,612.48	12.03%

Table 2	Senior pharmacy technicians Afc 6-8b			Junior pharmacy technicians Afc 4-5			Pre-reg. trainee pharmacy technicians			Total pharmacy technicians		
	Established posts WTE)	Posts occupied (permanent) Vacancy Rate %		Established posts WTE)	Posts occupied (permanent) Vacancy Rate %		Established posts WTE)	Posts occupied (permanent) Vacancy Rate %		Established posts WTE)	Posts occupied (permanent) Vacancy Rate %	
North East SHA	56.61	54.96	2.91%	256.89	239.58	6.74%	42.00	39.00	7.14%	355.50	333.54	6.18%
North West SHA	148.58	136.47	8.15%	557.16	529.23	5.01%	88.25	84.00	4.82%	793.99	749.70	5.58%
Yorkshire & The Humber SHA	126.05	111.93	11.20%	306.11	280.32	8.43%	24.00	23.00	4.17%	456.16	415.25	8.97%
East Midlands SHA	80.67	75.82	6.01%	314.19	277.63	11.64%	22.00	21.91	0.41%	416.86	375.36	9.96%
West Midlands SHA	96.74	93.67	3.17%	319.56	293.40	8.19%	45.00	41.00	8.89%	461.30	428.07	7.20%
East of England SHA	130.66	127.31	2.56%	358.06	314.44	12.18%	48.00	42.80	10.83%	536.72	484.55	9.72%
London SHA	298.86	285.31	4.53%	645.19	554.52	14.05%	98.00	93.83	4.26%	1,042.05	933.66	10.40%
South East Coast SHA	82.50	77.59	5.95%	248.42	214.73	13.56%	40.80	33.30	18.38%	371.72	325.62	12.40%
South Central SHA	91.07	83.99	7.77%	251.37	213.26	15.16%	39.00	36.92	5.33%	381.44	334.17	12.39%
South West SHA	101.43	95.23	6.11%	308.05	279.24	9.35%	34.00	35.00	-2.94%	443.48	409.47	7.67%
Wales	61.59	61.59	0.00%	321.12	300.37	6.46%	59.00	59.00	0.00%	441.71	420.96	4.70%
TOTAL	1,274.76	1,203.87	5.56%	3,886.12	3,496.72	10.02%	540.05	509.76	5.61%	5,700.93	5,210.35	8.61%



Discussion (including conclusion)

- The high levels of vacancy rates for Bands 6 and 7 pharmacist posts and Bands 4 and 5 pharmacy technician posts, together with consideration of the numbers being trained and national policy developments, cause great concern that a shortage of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians will continue or worsen
- The numbers of training places in some areas of the country has decreased recently due to the implementation of AfC coinciding with acute financial pressures in the NHS. In turn, several posts have been frozen or lost, affecting the staffing resource available to train the trainees required to fill the vacancies
- In addition, current policies requiring additional input into the safety agenda, extended roles such as consultant and prescribing pharmacists, including those in primary care and community pharmacy, will continue to increase the demand for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians
- The data have been used in each SHA area to inform discussions on recruitment and retention strategies and numbers of trainees to be trained

Limitations The survey is limited to NHS acute and mental health trusts and does not include pre-registration trainee pharmacists; these should be included in future surveys. (Pre-registration trainee pharmacist and PCT-employed staff will be included in the May 2008 survey). In addition, the community pharmacy workforce should be considered as NHS services become more integrated