

ECONOMIC DIGEST

Vol.15 No.10

A joint publication of the Connecticut Department of Labor & the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development

OCTOBER 2010

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In August...

Nonfarm Employment

Connecticut..... 1,616,100
 Change over month -0.06%
 Change over year +0.1%

United States 130,311,000
 Change over month -0.04%
 Change over year +0.2%

Unemployment Rate

Connecticut..... 9.1%
 United States 9.6%

Consumer Price Index

United States 218.3
 Change over year 1.2%

Pharmacist Employment Outlook Delivers a Dose of Brightness

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Pharmacists have long played an important role in the healthcare industry. While physicians diagnose a patient's ailments and prescribe medicine to treat it, pharmacists are responsible for distributing that medicine in a safe and accurate manner. As their careers evolve, pharmacists have been expanding their duties. With the increases in job responsibilities and the strong reliance the healthcare industry has on pharmacists, the job outlook remains strong.

What Do They Do?

Pharmacists do a lot more than just distribute prescription drugs to individuals. They also advise their patients, physicians,

and other health practitioners on the selection, dosages, interactions, and side effects of medications, as well as monitor the health and progress of those patients to ensure that they are using their medications safely and effectively. Some medications still require a pharmacist to compound (actual mixing of ingredients to form medications) them, though most come in standard dosages from pharmaceutical companies. Since many pharmacists work in a community setting, there tends to be a significant amount of customer interaction. They advise patients about general health topics, such as diet, exercise, and stress management, and provide information on

Average Hourly Wage for Pharmacists by Selected Labor Market Area, 2Q 2010



The Connecticut Economic Digest is published monthly by the Connecticut Department of Labor, Office of Research and the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development. Its purpose is to regularly provide users with a comprehensive source for the most current, up-to-date data available on the workforce and economy of the state, within perspectives of the region and nation.

The annual subscription is \$50. Send subscription requests to: *The Connecticut Economic Digest*, Connecticut Department of Labor, Office of Research, 200 Folly Brook Boulevard, Wethersfield, CT 06109-1114. Make checks payable to the Connecticut Department of Labor. Back issues are \$4 per copy. The Digest can be accessed free of charge from the DOL Web site. Articles from *The Connecticut Economic Digest* may be reprinted if the source is credited. Please send copies of the reprinted material to the Managing Editor. The views expressed by the authors are theirs alone and may not reflect those of the DOL or DECD.

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We would like to acknowledge the contributions of many DOL Research and DECD staff and Rob Damroth (CCT) to the publication of the Digest.

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products, such as durable medical equipment or home healthcare supplies.

In addition, most pharmacists complete third-party insurance forms and other paperwork. Pharmacists work in clean, well-lit, and well-ventilated areas and spend much of their 40-hour week on their feet. In an effort to better accommodate their customers, many community and hospital pharmacies are open for extended hours, so pharmacists may be required to work nights, weekends, and holidays.

Education and Training

A license is required to become a pharmacist throughout all fifty states. In order to obtain a license, a pharmacist must earn a Doctor of Pharmacy from a college of pharmacy and pass several examinations. An applicant to a Doctor of Pharmacy program must have completed two years of specific professional study.

The program then takes about four years to complete, with some of that time spent working with licensed pharmacists in a variety of practice settings. Upon completion of the program, an aspiring pharmacist must pass the North American Pharmacist Licensure Exam (NAPLEX). In Connecticut, the Multistate Pharmacy Jurisprudence Exam (MPJE) is also required.

Where Do They Work?

Nationally, there were approximately 267,860 pharmacists employed in 2009, with 2,670 of those jobs being in Connecticut. Most of those jobs (65 percent) were in a retail setting. About 22 percent of the pharmacists nationwide worked in hospitals. Other areas include mail order and Internet pharmacies, pharmaceutical wholesalers, offices of physicians, and the Federal Government.

Earnings

National average hourly earnings of pharmacists were \$51.27 in 2009. In Connecticut, as the chart on the front page shows, the Bridgeport-Stamford Labor Market Area's average hourly earnings were highest at \$56.82 during the second quarter 2010 period, while the average was \$54.21 for the State. The lowest average hourly earnings were \$48.51 in the Waterbury area.

Employment Outlook

Overall employment of pharmacists is projected to grow faster than average through the year 2018, at a rate of 17%. The strong growth rate is due in part to the increasing number of middle-aged and elderly people, as they tend to use more prescription drugs than younger people. Further demand for pharmacists comes from the scientific advances that lead to new drug products and an increasing number of people who obtain prescription drug coverage.

Pharmacists are also becoming increasingly involved in patient care. As prescription drugs become more complex, and as the number of people taking multiple medications increases, the potential for dangerous drug interactions will grow. The need for pharmacists to be present to offer counseling on the proper use of medication, assist in drug selection and dosage, and monitor complex drug regimens will increase the demand for pharmacists throughout medical care establishments. ■

