

Student Perceptions of Barriers to Innovation in Pharmacy Practice

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Background

Innovation is essential for the advancement of pharmacy practice. Pharmacists are expected to partake in innovative thought and problem-solving but may not always be properly educated on the steps for implementation or strategies to overcome barriers during the innovation process. Although there have been limited studies examining innovation in the medical field, relatively little research has explored the barriers to innovation in either pharmacy students or pharmacy practice. Being able to recognize and understand these barriers is the first step toward developing guided strategies and support to better promote innovative thinking.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to identify common perceived barriers to innovation in students at the Southern Illinois University – Edwardsville (SIUE) School of Pharmacy and to propose potential strategies to address and help overcome these barriers.

Methods

An inductive, qualitative thematic analysis was performed on deidentified student responses collected between 2022-2024 to the question “What barriers exist for you personally that inhibit your ability to think of innovative ideas/solutions?” The software MAXQDA 2018 was utilized to code and analyze responses. Three total rounds of coding were conducted. After the first round, a codebook was developed to be used for the remaining reflections. If new codes emerged, the codebook would be updated, and previous coded responses would be reviewed and re-coded as needed. After the analysis was complete, the coded segments were then grouped into seven main barriers. This study was approved by the IRB at Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville.

Results

Thematic analysis identified seven main barriers to innovation. These barriers contained self-perception challenges, such as struggles with identity, negative self-talk, and cognitive rigidity; skill and experience barriers, such as ability to effectively communicate, a lack of experience, and trouble with implementing the steps of the innovation process; and structural constraints, including feasibility challenges and a lack of resources.

Conclusion

The findings suggest that barriers are not only limited to pharmacy students’ educational experiences but also include individual perceptions of future professional identity and workplace environment. Recognition of these barriers may help to promote implementation of new

educational strategies into pharmacy institutions, which would be designed to better support students in overcoming perceived challenges to innovation.