

Conversations between experienced pharmacists and undergraduate pharmacy students in Norway – Exploring new ways of teaching the history of pharmacy.

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Background: In 2017/18, the executive of The Norwegian Society for the History of Pharmacy (NFHS) received a question from the International Society for the History of Pharmacy (ISHP) about how much the students are taught about the history of pharmacy. A survey sent by NFHS to all schools of pharmacy in Norway confirmed that the teaching of the history of pharmacy is rather limited and scattered. The first-year students at the Department of Pharmacy, University of Oslo, are only given a brief introduction to the history of pharmacy. We saw a need to change our teaching approach by learning history from elderly pharmacists. We therefore wanted to re-think the way we teach about major changes in the pharmacy industry, hospital and community pharmacy, and emergency preparedness etc.

Aim: To let students interview experienced pharmacists about important events in their professional lives, and to encourage students to find literature that place these stories into a larger historical perspective.

Method: In 2019, Professor Anne Gerd Granås initiated a collaboration with NFHS. They recruited pharmacists amongst their members who volunteered be interviewed by students. Groups of approximately 5 students were assigned 4 pharmacists each. The students arranged an interview either on campus, in a public place, or at the pharmacist's home. The group appointed a secretary and an interviewer. All pharmacists signed a consent form. The pharmacists were invited to share something from their professional career that they thought was important to pass on to today's pharmacy students. The interviews were recorded via students' mobile phones or laptops. The video files were transferred to the university learning platform, and then deleted from the students' recording devices.

Result: A total of 16 pharmacists agreed to share important events and reflections from their professional lives. Themes that were highlighted included for instance: Life as a student, establishing hospital pharmacies and clinical pharmacy, development of the pharmaceutical industry, and the use of antibiotics in fish farming. Others talked about the importance of working abroad, building research careers, and the importance of volunteer work in national and international pharmaceutical organizations. The students submitted their written reports, and also presented this to all their fellow students.

Discussion and Conclusion: The students liked to learn about major changes that have taken place in the pharmacy world in the (relatively) short time of someone's life. They also enjoyed personal anecdotes about "what it was like" being young in the last century and being part of establishing the public and private institutions for medicines and health in Norway. Several asked if the female pharmacists had experienced gender discrimination during work life, which they at large had not.

The student said that this way of interviewing elderly had broadened their perspective of job opportunities. They were also inspired by the fact that the pharmacists were still, despite their high age, still engaged in the pharmaceutical profession and policy discussions.

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