

**UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA**

**PHARMACOETHICS VALUES AND FACTORS  
AFFECTING THEM: A COMPARISON  
BETWEEN COMMUNITY PHARMACISTS IN  
MALAYSIA AND THE UNITED STATES OF  
AMERICA**

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## ABSTRACT

Community pharmacists claimed to encounter conflict between professionalism and business interest. This study examined the ethical compliances of community pharmacists in Malaysia and the USA; to devise an instrument to study Pharmacoethics Values among community pharmacists based on the Code of Conduct for Pharmacists and Bodies Corporate by the Pharmacy Board of Malaysia; and to find out the factors contributing to the low Pharmacoethics Values among the community pharmacists in both countries. The novel pharmacoethics devise, which was constructed and tested for its validity and reliability using exploratory factor analysis, Cronbach alpha ( $\alpha$ ) value and test-retest, was mail-sent to all 1426 registered community pharmacists in Malaysia and 120 hand-delivered and immediately collected, to conveniently chosen respondents in the USA. Data was analyzed using SPSS for Windows version 12.0. Accordingly, descriptive statistics, Kruskal-Wallis, Mann-Whitney U or Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient were used to analyze the data and test at the 0.05 level of significance. In Malaysia, out of 1242 questionnaires delivered, 266 responded with consent. Factor analysis yielded four ethical domains, which were then named Business Practice, Ethical Practice, Professional Practice and Personal Attitude. Demographically, ownership status (Malaysia=56.8% pharmacy owner, USA=58.3% pharmacist only); type and size of pharmacy outlets; levels of income; and ethics exposure during undergraduate training (Malaysia=64.3%, USA=94.2%) were significantly different between Malaysia and the USA. The other findings were that the community pharmacists in the USA significantly behaved more ethically than the community pharmacists in Malaysia in two of the pharmacoethics dimensions, namely Ethical Practice and Personal Attitude. The Pharmacoethics Values were in the range of 'mostly compliant' for all four pharmacoethics dimensions for the USA and two pharmacoethics dimensions for Malaysia and 'moderately compliant' for the other two. Gender and age affect Pharmacoethics Values in both countries, where ownership status and type of pharmacy outlets, only affect the Pharmacoethics Values in Malaysia. Lengths of practice and location of the pharmacy outlets only affect the Pharmacoethics Values in the USA. Other factors tested did not significantly affect the Pharmacoethics Values in both countries. In spite of its limitations, this study holds a promising future in studying pharmacoethics in Malaysia.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	ii
<b>ABSTRACT (ENGLISH)</b>	iii
<b>ABSTRAK (BAHASA MELAYU)</b>	iv
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	v
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	xi
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	xiv
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b>	xvi
<b>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION</b>	1
1.0 Background	1
1.1 Definition of Pharmacoethics Values	2
1.2 Problem Identification	3
1.3 Research Questions	5
1.4 Objectives of the Research	5
1.5 Scope of the Study	6
1.6 Expected Significant Benefits of This Research	6
<b>CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	8
A. Theoretical Background	8
2.1 Professional and Professionalism	8
2.2 Ethics	10
2.2.1 Moral or Ethical?	12
2.3 Ethical Theories and Concept	12
2.3.1 Key Moral Concept in Healthcare	13
2.3.2 Pharmacoethics Concept	14
2.4 Licensing of Community Pharmacist	16
2.5 Code of Conduct	18
2.6 Moral Reasoning and Ethics	18

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Background

The conflict between ethics and business in the community pharmacy business is as old as the occupation itself (as cited in Kansanaho, Puumalainen, Varunki, Ahonen & Airaksinen, 2005). Pharmacist is one of the highly paid jobs (Najib, 2005), therefore, in many smaller pharmacies, community pharmacists play the role as professionals and often also the manager and retailer. If they own the pharmacy, another role will be added to them that is ownership. Ownership, or entrepreneurship, is concerned with risk taking, the desire for wealth, independence, personal satisfaction and power (Futter, 1994). Retailers make goods and services available to consumers by identifying, stimulating and satisfying demand. Managers use limited resources, efficiently and effectively, to achieve business, staff and client goals. Professionals provide valued services through trust, commitment, and competence and they should be sincere in performing this without a small trace of personal interest (Futter, 1994).

It is very important that pharmacists put their professionalism ahead of their business interest. Most community pharmacists usually encounter a serious potential conflict of interest. As professionals, they are expected to be knowledgeable about drugs and to dispense them in a responsible and ethical manner. As retailer, their income depends on the sale of products (Barrett, 2001). Desire for wealth in ownership for example, might lead to unethical behaviour. The purpose of this study is to investigate the community pharmacists' behaviour towards professionalism when they have many roles and the factors that will influence the pharmacists' behaviour.