Oncology Pharmacist

Pharmacists are people who prepare and dispense medicines to patients. An oncology pharmacist works with doctors to heal patients with cancer. Mixing and giving powerful drugs to children sick with cancer is a demanding but very important job.

Career Path

A student who wishes to become a pharmacist should take lots of courses in math and science. After high school, the student should enroll in a university with a good pharmacy program. At most schools, a student can earn their Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm. D.) degree in six years.

Working with children with cancer is challenging but can be very rewarding. Oncology pharmacists mix the chemotherapy medicines to treat the patient's cancer. These pharmacists also talk to patients in the hospital to find out how well the medicine is working and to see if the patient has any side effects or bad reactions to the drugs. Many pharmacists also do research to find out how well different treatments work on patients with different kinds of cancer and to test new drug therapies.

It can be difficult to work with very sick children and it is always very upsetting when a patient does not get better, but with the many new treatments available, most cancer patients do get better and are ready to leave the hospital shortly after they arrive. The most exciting part of this job is seeing very sick children recover. When a patient recovers and can return home and go back to school, the pharmacist knows that all their hard work was worthwhile.

Technology Spotlight

When mixing chemotherapy drugs, the pharmacist must be very careful. Fumes from the drugs could make the pharmacist sick, and spills could contaminate the environment. That's why chemotherapy drugs are always mixed under a special hood that sucks the air containing the harmful fumes out of the room. The picture below shows a pharmacist working with cancer drugs under a hood. Most kitchens also have a hood or vent over the stove to suck cooking fumes out of the house. Where else might you find a hood being used? Think of jobs that produce harmful odors - perhaps these jobs could be performed under a hood!

Other Places a Hood Might Be Useful

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