

South Carolina Board of Pharmacy Position Statement Working Conditions in Pharmacies

The purpose of this statement is to promote the health and safety of patients, and to ensure compliance with the South Carolina Pharmacy Practice Act relating to operational standards, specifically S.C. Code Ann. § 40-43-86 (B)(4) which relates to adequate staffing of licensed personnel in the pharmacies.

The South Carolina Board of Pharmacy (SCBOP) has received numerous letters, telephone calls, and in-person testimonies from pharmacists regarding the inadequate conditions and environment in the pharmacies in which they work.

The comments involve the following issues:

- A pharmacist inability to take periodic breaks, such as a break for meals and basic human needs, especially when working long hours;
- The inability of a pharmacy manager or pharmacist-in-charge (who is not the owner of the pharmacy) to make decisions about the operation of the pharmacy, such as the employment and scheduling of a sufficient number of licensed pharmacists and registered pharmacy technicians to competently and safely provide pharmacy services.
- A perceived or real threat regarding loss of employment based on unattainable metrics

SCBOP recognizes that unsatisfactory working conditions in a pharmacy may involve a two-fold problem:

(1) unsupportive employers; and

(2) pharmacists who are allowed to take meal and rest breaks, but do not, due to a myriad of reasons. However, in the interest of the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of South Carolina and the pharmacists and technicians who are caring for the public, SCBOP issues the following position statement:

- SCBOP supports the concept that meal and rest breaks are basic conditions of employment in a pharmacy. Accordingly, SCBOP encourages all employers to provide reasonable breaks during a regular workday for meals and rest.
- SCBOP encourages all pharmacists to take meal and rest breaks when permitted. If the pharmacy has only one pharmacist on duty, appropriate measures must be taken to ensure the security of the prescription drugs in the pharmacy when the pharmacist is absent.
- SCBOP encourages employers to value patient safety over operational efficiency and financial targets
- SCBOP encourages employers to value and prioritize patient safety, quality of care, and pharmacist well-being when setting workload expectations and ensure the pharmacy workforce is adequately staffed, trained, and utilized to complete the expected work volume.

- SCBOP discourages employers from establishing working conditions that tend to increase the stress on the dispensing pharmacists, such as setting quotas on the number of prescriptions and/or immunizations that a pharmacist is required to dispense/provide per hour or day in order to keep from being terminated or to achieve a favorable performance evaluation.
- SCBOP encourages employers to empower the pharmacist-in-charge to make decisions regarding the pharmacy's working environment, such as being able to employ and/or schedule additional support staff if needed.
- SCBOP encourages employers to increase the opportunities for communication between employees and management. SCBOP encourages employers to establish written policies and procedures to promote communication between employees and management. Such policies and procedures should permit a pharmacist to make written requests of management regarding working conditions and expect a reasonably timely response to such request.
- SCBOP encourages employers to establish peer review committees (composed of employee pharmacists and management) to hear and make decisions regarding employee concerns relating to working conditions and other practice issues.
- SCBOP encourages pharmacists to recommend policies and procedures to employers to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the pharmacy.

In summary, SCBOP encourages pharmacists to be valuable employees and pharmacy owners to be good employers.