Effect of the APh License on Pharmacists’ Scope of Practice in California
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Objective
Analyze current utilization of the Advanced Practice Pharmacist license (APh) among Advanced Practice Pharmacists (APPs) in California to determine how it has impacted their scope of practice.

Introduction
The California State Board of Pharmacy adopted the APh license in 2016 as the fruition of Senate Bill 493 (2013), which aimed to expand pharmacists’ provider status in California. The APh license purports to expand pharmacist scope of practice by authorizing pharmacists to: (1) perform patient assessments, (2) order and interpret drug therapy-related tests in coordination with a patient’s prescriber to monitor progress, (3) refer patients to other healthcare providers, (4) participate in the evaluation and management of diseases and health conditions in collaboration with other health care providers, and (5) manage drug therapy upon referral from a patient’s treating prescriber when necessary and medically appropriate, in accordance with a protocol with a physician or facility. Since 2016, over 500 APPs have been licensed in California, yet no California-specific study has been conducted on the impact of the APh license on pharmacists’ scope of practice. With this study, we hope to understand whether the APh license has helped pharmacists expand their scope of practice.

Methods
● Created a 20-question survey using Qualtrics software.
  ○ Distributed survey via professional association mailing lists and U.S. postal mail with a QR code.
● Assessed the practice of APh-authorized responsibilities before and after acquiring the APh license.
  ○ Benefit was defined as pharmacists previously unable to perform an APh-authorized responsibility but able to do so after licensure.
  ○ No benefit was defined as pharmacists already able to perform an APh-authorized responsibility before licensure or unable to perform the responsibility after licensure.
● Used descriptive statistics to analyze demographic information, motivations and barriers to licensure, as well as future expectations of the APh license.
● Performed the Fisher’s exact test to determine significance of the results for each APh-authorized responsibility.

Results

Results (Cont.)
• We identified that pharmacists did not benefit from obtaining APh licensure in terms of expansion of scope of practice for five specific APh-authorized responsibilities (p<0.00001) (Figure 1).
• The most endorsed motivation for obtaining the APh license was the desire to support the expansion of the pharmacy profession (Figure 2). The most endorsed barrier to using the license was billing (Figure 3).
• Although 49% of APPs believe that the APh license has not expanded their scope of practice (Figure 4), 63% expect it to expand the pharmacists’ scope of practice in the next 10 years (Figure 4).

Discussion
• While the largest single motivator for attaining the APh license was to support the growth of the pharmacy profession, it is important to note that motives based on personal benefit (including recognition, potential salary increase, and expanded scope of practice) were collectively more cited.
• Currently, there is no perceived expansion of practice among pharmacists with the APh license. However, many APPs expect the license to further pharmacists’ scope of practice in the next 10 years.
• For the APh license to achieve its intended goal, the billing, administrative, and time-related barriers to practicing each of the five APh-associated responsibilities must be addressed.
• Alternately, there has been discourse regarding incorporation of the language of the APh license into the responsibilities of any pharmacist.

Conclusion
• Since the APh license was recently implemented in 2016, it is inconclusive whether the lack of perceived benefit is due to its relatively new status, an inconsistent understanding of the license, or a lack of licensure in the target population (community pharmacists).
• This is an ongoing study; we hope to collect and analyze more responses in the coming months and to understand whether or not the APh license is necessary for pharmacists seeking to expand their scope of practice, and possibly inform future legislation to achieve this goal.

References