

**Title: Pharmacy Students' Moral Reasoning Skills: Implications for the  
Pharmacy Profession**

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## **Objective**

This investigation examined the moral reasoning of ten classes of first and third year students at schools of pharmacy in the United States. Moral reasoning assessment is an assessment of conceptual adequacy of moral thinking. It attempts to tap the basic conceptual frameworks that individuals use to analyze social-moral problems and to judge the proper course of action. It is a significant construct because of its pragmatic and positive relationship to clinical performance in health professionals. Thus, pharmacy students at higher levels of moral reasoning can be expected to perform at higher levels on clinical performance measurements.

## **Methods and Setting**

Ten geographically diverse schools of pharmacies were invited to participate in the study. Each school accepted and the DIT (moral reasoning instrument) was administered by a faculty coordinator at each school of pharmacy. The DIT was given to either first-year or third year based on a systematic random sample. It was administered to pharmacy students during class time.

## **Key Findings and Conclusion**

Results indicated that first and third year American pharmacy students may not be as morally developed as students from other health professions and as adults in general. In addition, the pharmacy curriculum does not appear to foster moral development since first and third year pharmacy students' scores on moral reasoning are not significantly different between the classes. These findings are troublesome in light of the link between moral reasoning and clinical performance. The results are discussed along with plausible explanations, potential implications for the profession, and suggestions for selecting pharmacy students to schools of pharmacy.