

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS AND DRUG ADDICTION IN PHARMCISTS

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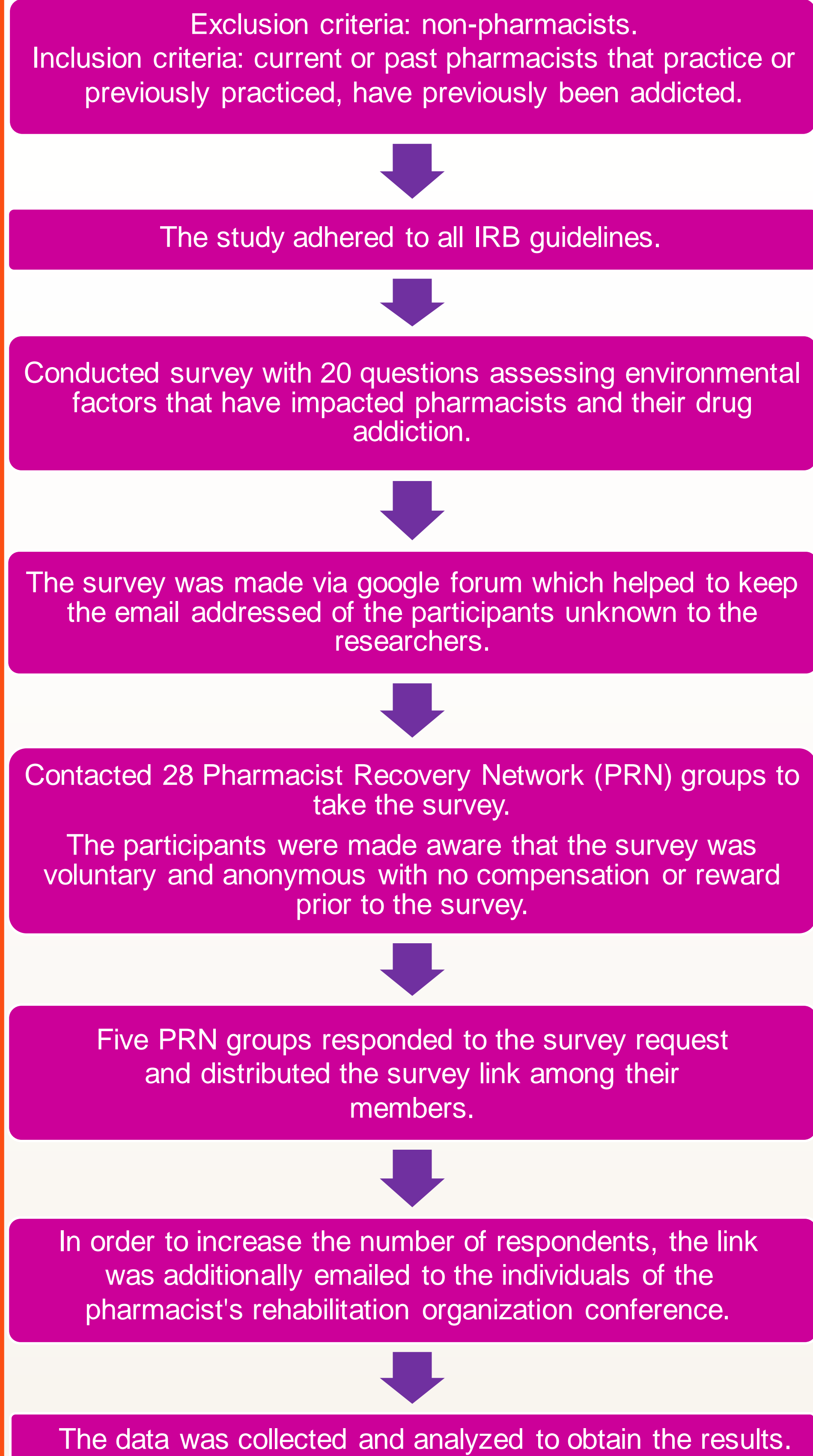
INTRODUCTION

- Pharmacists have an increased knowledge base on the overall healthcare and wellbeing of an individual, they are not immune to drug addiction.
- American Pharmacist Association reported in 1989 that 19% of practicing pharmacists are occasional users of controlled substances without a prescription. However, this prevalence has increased to 58.7 % in a self-reported study performed in 2004.¹
- Previously, a survey was conducted to evaluate the addicted pharmacist and to identify the environmental factors that are most likely to lead to their addiction. In this survey, pharmacists in the retail setting were more likely to suffer addiction due to stress and underlying pain and depression.

OBJECTIVES

- The purpose of this study was to update the information originally collected by Dr. Hart and colleagues.
- This study was to evaluate pharmacists with a history of drug addiction to provide a more comprehensive view in current pharmacy practice of specific environment. Additionally personal behavioral factors that can lead to addiction in pharmacists were assessed.

METHODS



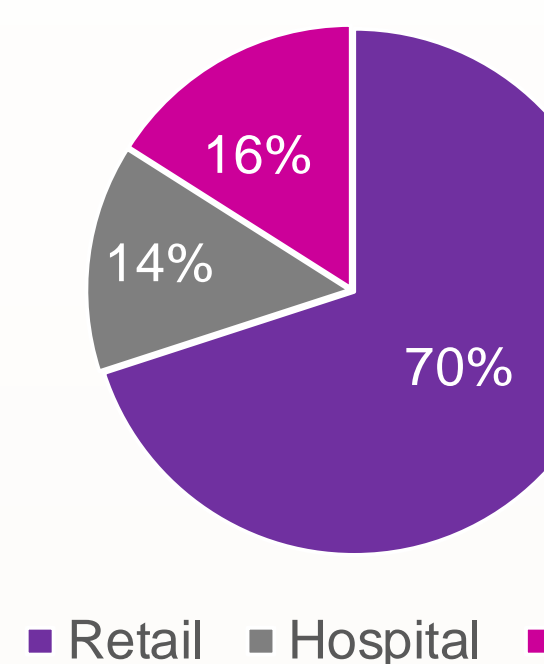
RESULTS

- A total of 67 pharmacists from five different states including Georgia, Virginia, Ohio, Arkansas and Massachusetts. The response rate to the survey questions ranged from 73-99%.
- History of prescription or illicit drug use prior to becoming a pharmacist was reported as 23% (15/66) and 33% (22/66) respectively.
- About 5% (3/66) of respondents chose to become a pharmacist partially because of "easy access" to commonly abused drugs.

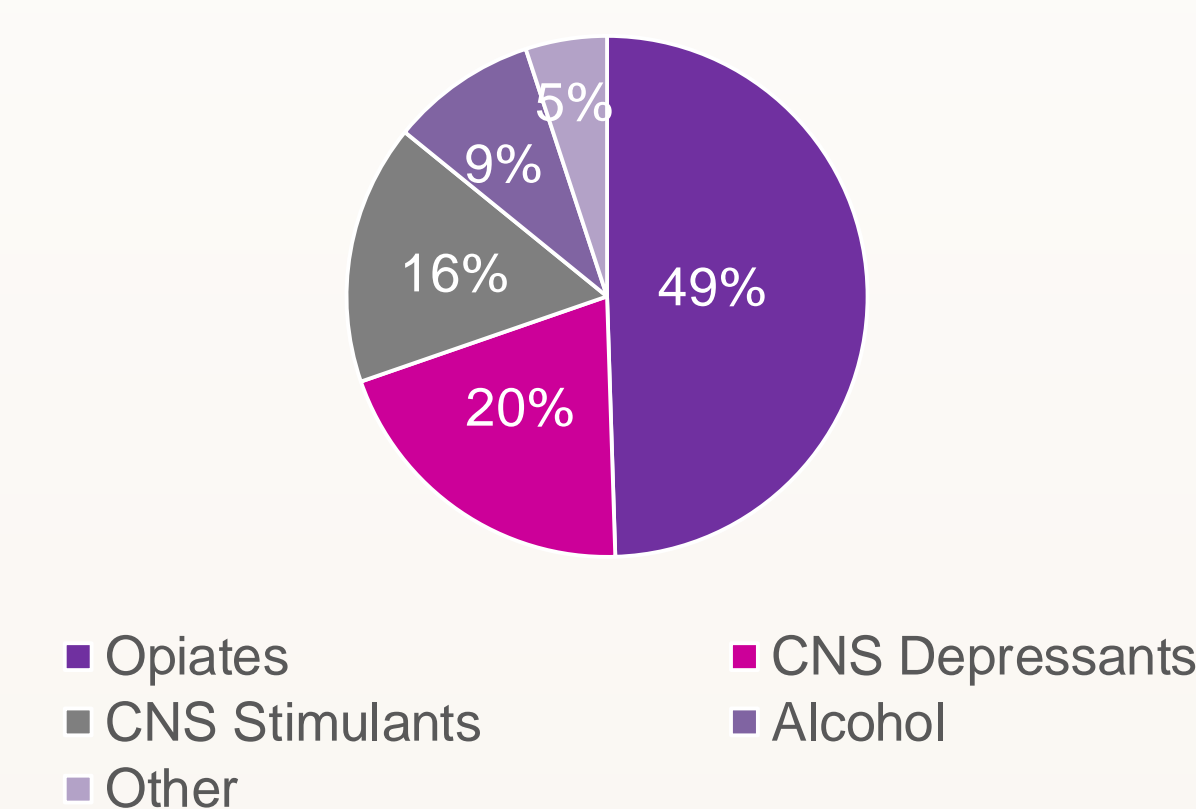
RESULTS CONT'D

- Thirty-six percent (24/66) of participants had family/loved ones/significant others that were aware of their disease of drug addiction. Thirty-two percent (21/65) of participants had someone in their immediate family with a history of substance abuse.
- Thirty percent (20/66) considered or attempted suicide.

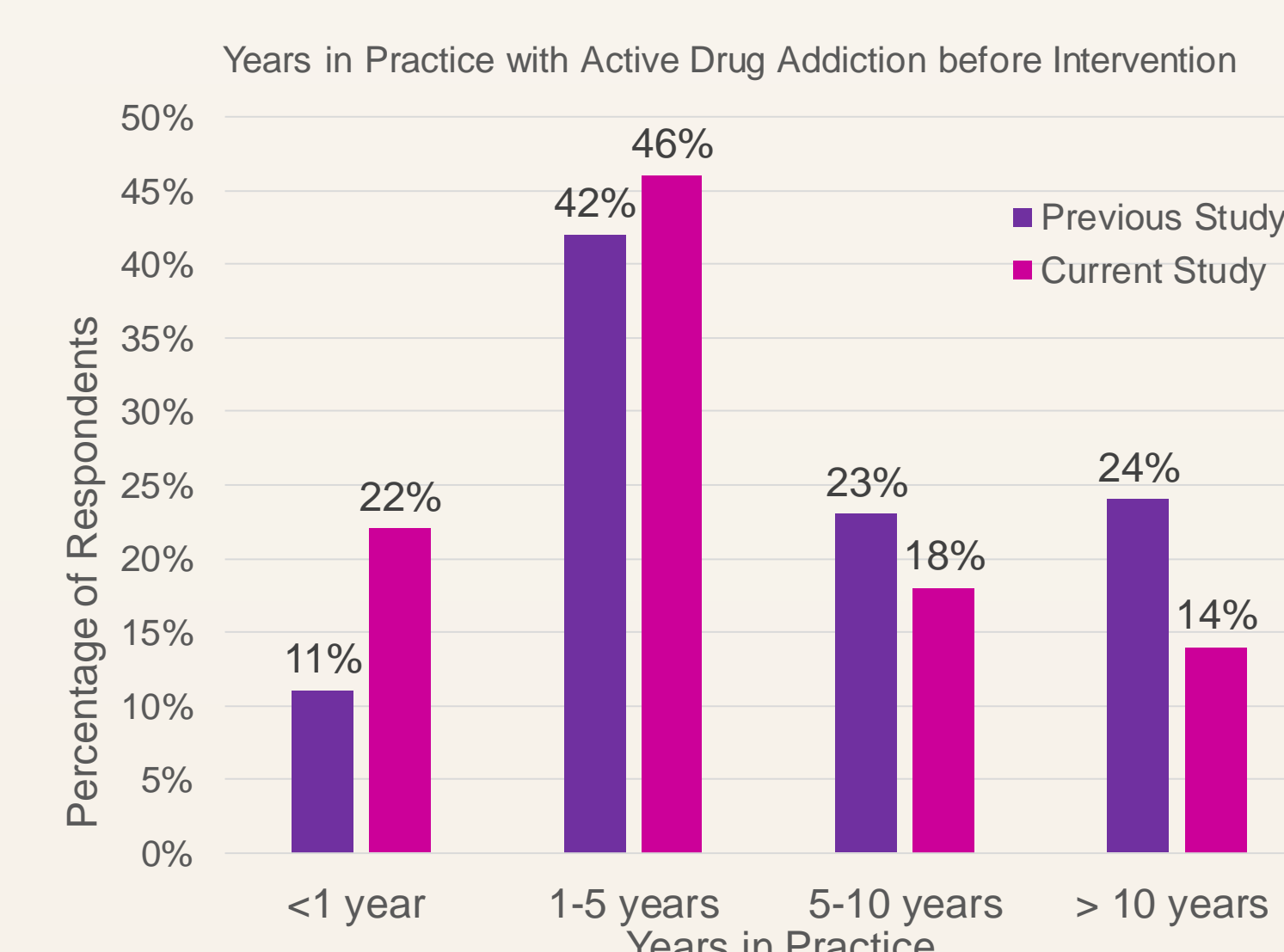
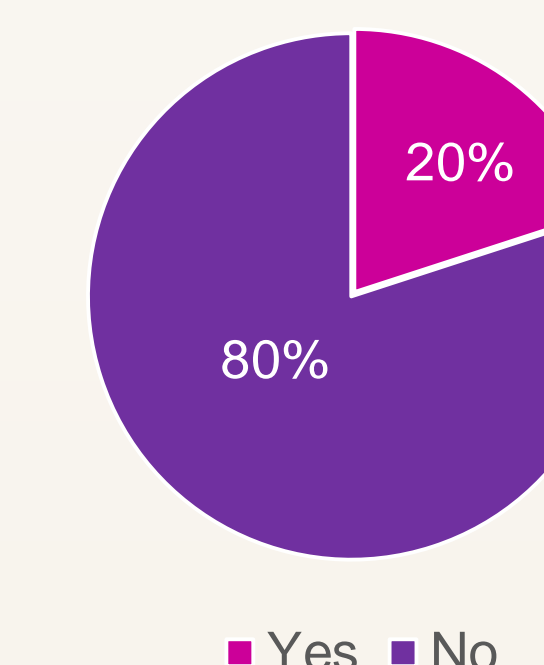
What area of pharmacy did you practice in?



What was your most commonly abused drug of choice?



Has the switch of hydrocodone from a Schedule III controlled substance to Schedule II controlled substance affected your ability to obtain the drug?



DISCUSSION

- Pharmacists in the retail setting were more likely to suffer from addiction, compared to those in other pharmacy settings.
- A history of drug addiction prior to becoming a pharmacist, a family history of substance abuse, and having friends or colleagues with drug addiction were identified as risk factors to drug addiction as a pharmacist.
- The awareness of drug addiction prior to becoming a pharmacist was low among the participants and others in their lives.
- The change of regulation of opioid medications (hydrocodone) from CIII to CII did not seem to interfere with the ability or desire of impaired pharmacists to obtain their medications of abuse.
- Our results show that pharmacists with drug addiction were being intervened upon in their earlier years of practice for their treatment indicating the increase in awareness of drug addiction in pharmacists. However, the majority of them were forced to be intervened rather than voluntarily seeking treatment.
- Drug addiction affected addicted pharmacists psychologically leading to consideration or attempt of suicide as the result of getting caught or during the active disease.

CONCLUSION

- There are many different environmental and behavioral factors that can affect a pharmacist in their addiction but there is not one ultimate factor that causes the disease. Health care professionals and pharmacy schools can play a role in helping identify those who may be at higher risk in order to decrease the number of pharmacists that suffer from drug addiction.

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