

# The Teaching of Pharmacy Ethics at U.S. Pharmacy Schools

David M. Baker, J.D., Western New England University CoPHS, Suzanne Larson, Pharm.D., Midwestern University CoP, Sister Michaela Serpa, Pharm.D., Idaho State University L.S. Skaggs CoP, Jordan Baye, Pharm.D., South Dakota State University CoP&AHP, Robert Cisneros, Ph.D., Campbell University CoP&HS (emeritus)



## Background

- In *ACPE Standards 2016*, Appendix I lists required elements for the Doctor of Pharmacy Curriculum which includes the incorporation of ethics.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, students are expected to demonstrate competence in interprofessional team dynamics, including the ethics of interprofessional practice (Standard 11.1), and be exposed to professional ethics and behaviors during Introductory Pharmacy Practice Experiences (IPPEs; Standard 12.5)
- While *ACPE Standards 2016* require that ethics be taught and practiced in the PharmD Curriculum, the methods of delivery are not specified, leaving a broad range of approaches available to individual colleges and schools of pharmacy.
- In January 2024, a draft of the *ACPE Standards 2025* were released. Ethics in the PharmD curriculum was addressed in relation to the IPPE Curriculum, and again in the required elements of the Doctor of Pharmacy Curriculum.<sup>2</sup>

## Objective(s)

- The objectives of this research were:
  - To determine how US pharmacy schools meet teaching pharmacy ethics *ACPE Standards 2016*.
  - To determine whether ethics faculty desire subject content expansion.
  - To determine what additional teaching resources would be beneficial.

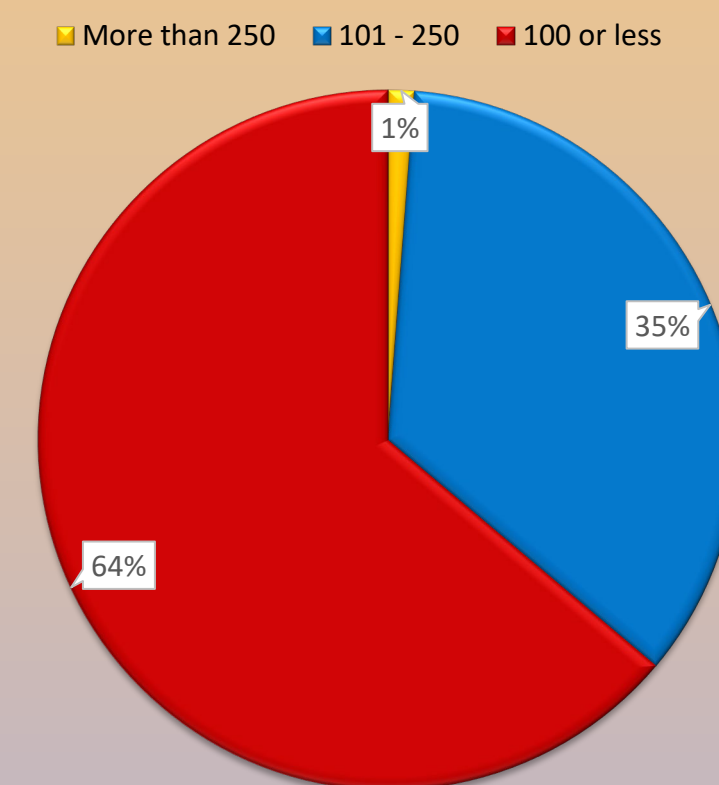
## Methods

- The study and its design was approved by the Western New England University Institutional Review Board.
- 142 pharmacy school Deans were asked via email to identify the responsible pharmacy ethics faculty at their institution. If no response was received after 3 attempts, the Dean was considered the contact for the teaching survey.
- A 12-question survey instrument, designed utilizing SurveyMonkey, was emailed to each identified faculty member, or the dean if no identified faculty, beginning in November 2021. Follow-up emails were sent at 2-week intervals for 6-weeks. If nonresponsive after three attempts, then telephone solicitation by members of the Teaching Pharmacy Ethics Committee was attempted. As with the email solicitations, the telephone solicitations were made to each identified faculty member, or the dean if no identified faculty.
- All data collection concluded in October 2023.
- Information from the survey instrument was gathered by the Teaching Pharmacy Ethics Committee members. The results were analyzed as to what course work is used to meet the *ACPE Standards 2016*, what teaching modalities (i.e., didactic vs. experiential) and resources (e.g., case studies, textbooks, PowerPoint slides, etc.) are used with what frequency, what faculty believe is necessary teaching time for ethics in the pharmacy program, and what teaching resources would faculty find most beneficial in support of teaching ethics.

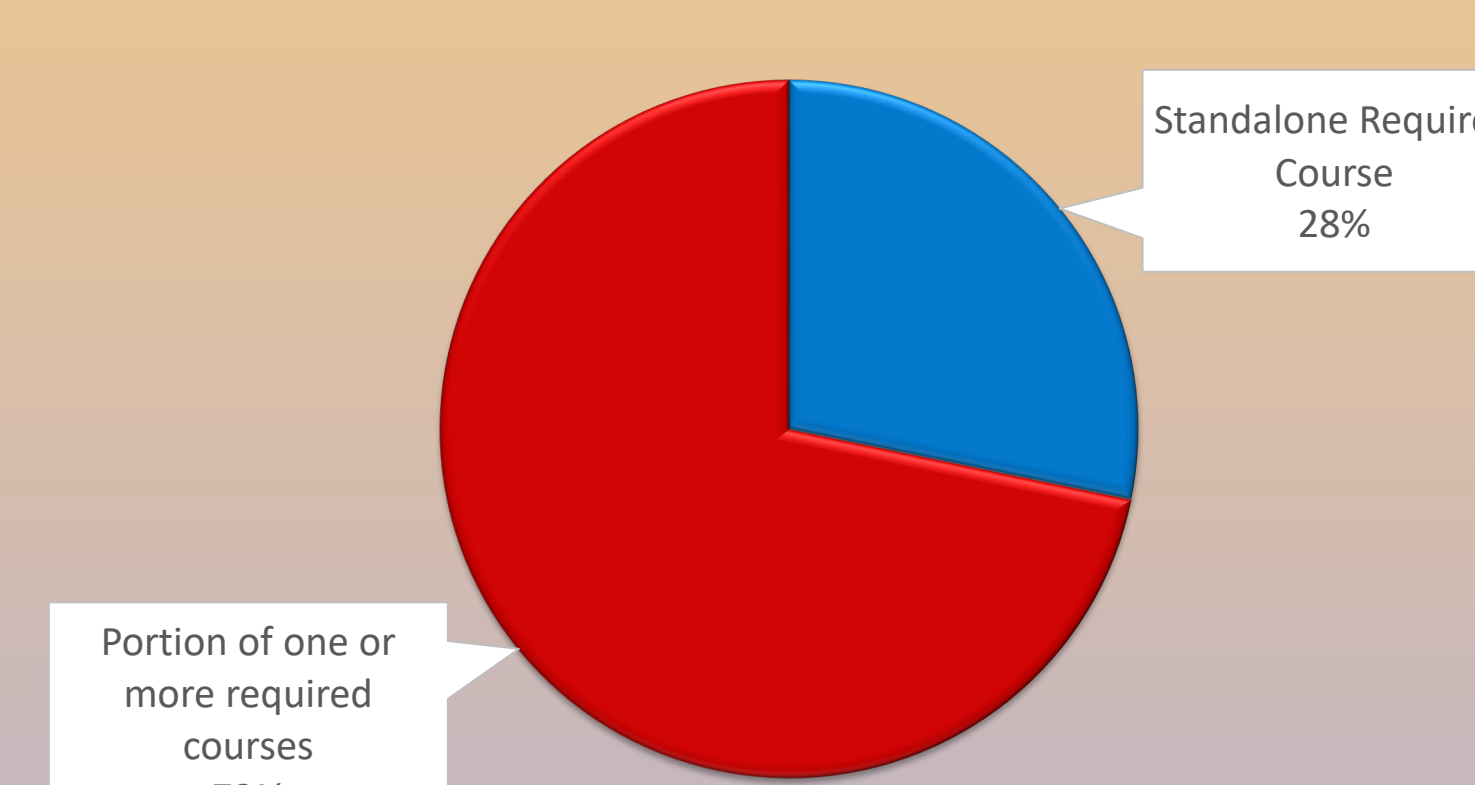
## Results

- Ninety schools (63%) responded; 53% were public and 47% were private. Of the 90 schools, 66% had class sizes of 100 or less, 33% with 101-250, and 1% with over 250.
- Only 28% of respondents have a separate required ethics course to meet the ACPE requirement, while 72% meet the requirement as elements of other course(s).
- Ethics electives were available at only 17% of responding institutions.

Program Size (Number of Students)

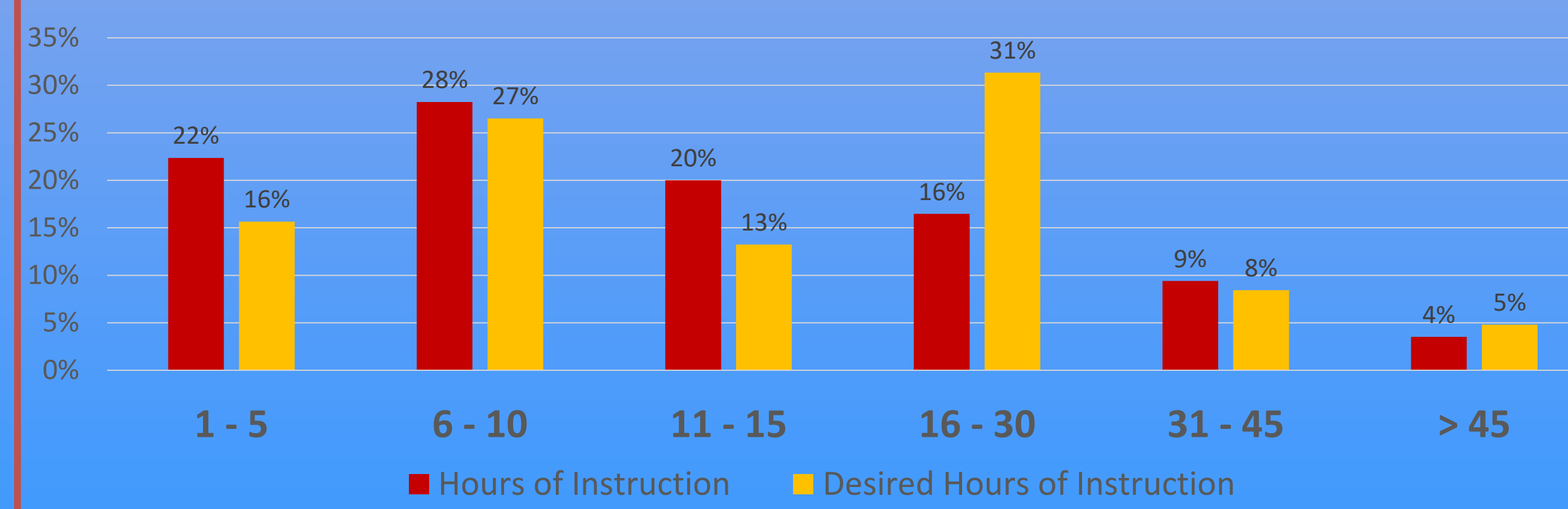


Ethics in the Pharmacy Curriculum

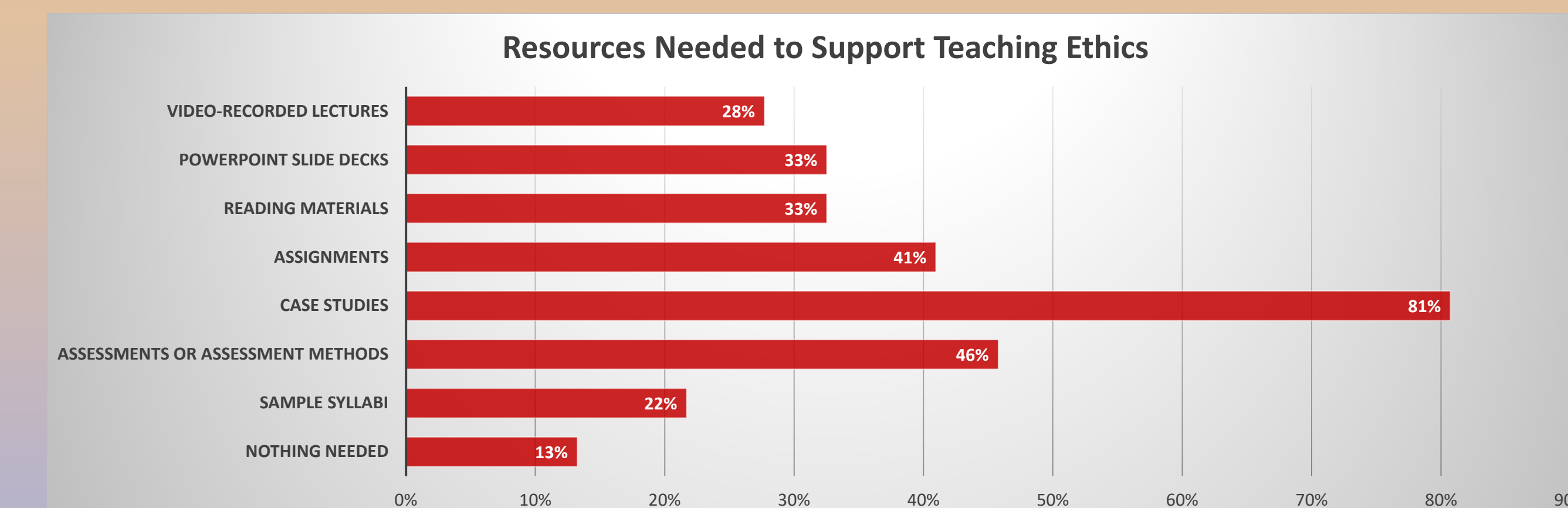
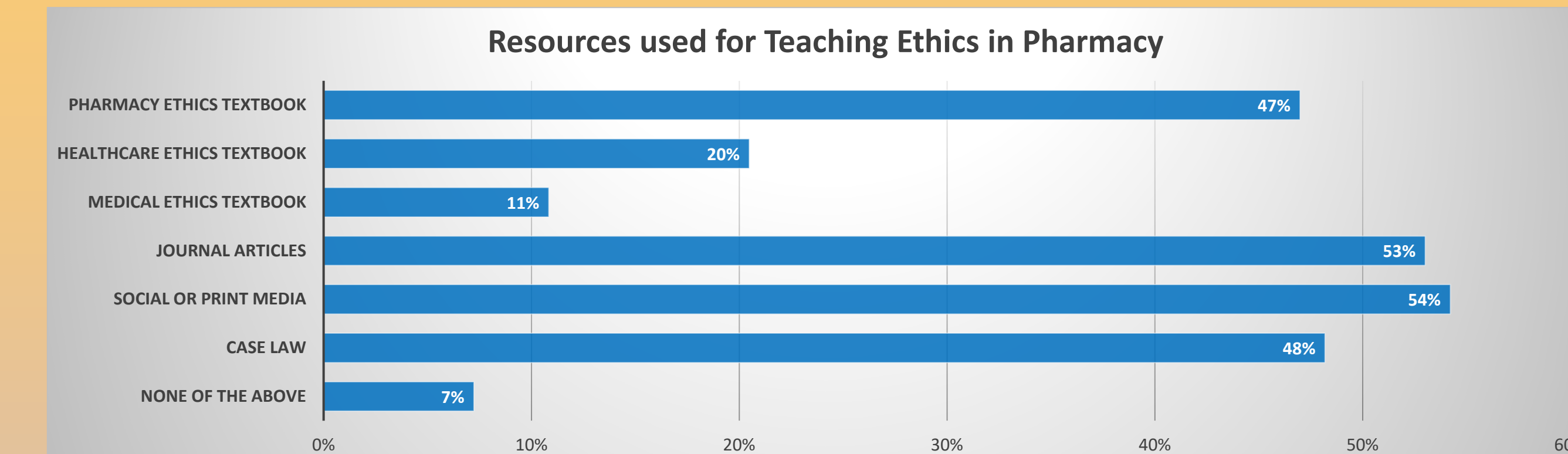


- The largest group (28%) devotes 6-10 hours in didactic instruction, but most believe 16-30 didactic hours (31%) should be dedicated to ethics instruction. There was no significant difference between the hours of didactic instruction and the desired hours of didactic instruction.
- Most programs provide 1-10 hours of experiential instruction (86%). Sixty-five percent of respondents agree with the need for 1-10 hours of experiential instruction and 26% would increase experiential instruction to 11-30 hours.
- Ethics instruction resources used included journal articles (56%), social or print media (54%), case law (51%), and a pharmacy ethics textbook (48%).
- Teaching resources desired included case studies (81%), assessments or assessment methods (46%), assignments (43%), PowerPoint slide decks (34%), and reading materials (33%).

Didactic hours of Ethics Instruction



## Results



## Conclusions

- Since time, content, and resource requirements for pharmacy ethics instruction are not specified in the *ACPE Standards 2016*, these results provide a starting point to judge what is adequate and/or preferred.
- Pharmacy ethics faculty desire additional time for instruction, as well as additional teaching resources with which to teach.
- To assist pharmacy ethics faculty, the AACP Health Care Ethics SIG has developed a repository of ethics course syllabi and is developing an ethics resource toolkit that may be beneficial to faculty newly tasked with teaching this content.

## References

- Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education. Accreditation standards and key elements for the professional program in pharmacy leading to the doctor of pharmacy degree. Standards 2016. Chicago, IL: ACPE; 2015. <https://www.acpe-accredit.org/pdf/Standards2016FINAL.pdf>. Accessed May 30, 2024.
- Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education. Accreditation standards and key elements for the professional program in pharmacy leading to the doctor of pharmacy degree. Draft Standards 2025. Chicago, IL: ACPE; 2024. <https://www.acpe-accredit.org/pdf/Standard2025DRAFTForComment.pdf>. Accessed May 30, 2024.

## Disclosures

- None of the authors have anything to disclose concerning possible financial or personal relationships with commercial entities that may have a direct or indirect interest in the subject matter.