

# Pharmacy Student Summer Research Fellowship Proposal for 2020

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## ***FACULTY INFORMATION:***

**NAME:** Megan Smith

**DEPARTMENT:** Pharmacy Practice

**LOCATION:** Little Rock

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## ***PROJECT INFORMATION:***

**TITLE:** Evaluating rural community pharmacists' perceptions of integrating mental health services to reach underserved populations

**LOCATION OF THE PROJECT:** Little Rock

## **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT:**

Mental illness and suicide are significant problems in the US and in Arkansas. In 2018, Arkansas ranked 50<sup>th</sup> for poor mental health days and those in rural areas reported higher numbers of poor mental health days per month on average. Suicide is the leading cause of injury-related deaths for Arkansans between the ages of 20 and 64 and again, rural residents are at greater risk. Several risk factors put Arkansans and particularly rural Arkansans at risk for poor mental health and suicide. A key risk factor is limited resources for care in the form of and mental health and primary care providers. However, community pharmacists are more accessible in general and in Arkansas. Patients visit a pharmacist 35 times a year on average, while visiting other professionals only four times a year. Pharmacists have training that may make them ideal for screening and/or intervention for mental health problems. There has been a recent push for community pharmacists to engage in mental health interventions, yet no research has been conducted on how to best implement these types of mental health focused interventions in community pharmacy settings. This project will utilize qualitative interviews with community pharmacists to identify their perceptions of integrating mental health and/or suicide prevention interventions into their practice and to identify barriers and facilitators to implementing these interventions. There will be a focus on including community pharmacists in rural areas, as they may face additional or unique challenges or facilitators to implementation. Following analysis of the qualitative data, we will host an Arkansas Pharmacists' Summit for Mental Health, a collaborative summit of pharmacists, pharmacy practice experts, implementation experts, and mental healthcare leaders. The goal of the summit will be to use the data collected and expert knowledge to prioritize and operationalize mental health interventions and potential implementation strategies to be tested in a subsequent grant proposal. This study will move the field closer to improving care for rural and underrepresented populations. Expanding rural community pharmacists' practice to include mental health and/or suicide prevention will dramatically increase access to care for rural Arkansans.

**STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES-DUTIES IN THE PROPOSED PROJECT:**

Participate in interviews, help schedule interviews, help organize transcripts, code data, analysis, compilation of reports for summit, participate in summit if so desired, and opportunity to assist in poster and manuscript submissions. The summit and poster/manuscript preparation will most likely occur end of summer or the Fall.

**ESTIMATED TIME FOR PROJECT COMPLETION:** \_\_\_12\_\_\_ weeks

**DOES THE WORK INVOLVE ANIMAL RESEARCH?** YES -----  
NO ---X-----

**ORAL/POSTER PRESENTATION OPPORTUNITY:** yes

**MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSION:** Possible journal names for this work to be submitted:

- Research in social & administrative pharmacy
- BMC health services research
- Substance abuse treatment, prevention, and policy
- Rural and remote health