BACKGROUND
Addiction is a chronic, neurological disease characterized by impaired control over drug or alcohol use, compulsive use, and continued use despite consequences, harms, and cravings. It has been reported that 46% of pharmacists use prescription drugs without a prescription. Twenty percent of pharmacists reported that they used a prescription drug without a prescription at least 5 times or more throughout their lifetime. Drug abuse involves the use of a medication, in a manner that deviates from medical, legal, and societal standards. Addiction results from the use of substances that produces a dopamine surge, activating the reward pathway. There are networks and treatment facilities available to help keep addicted pharmacists in recovery. One very active network is The Pharmacists’ Recovery Network (PRN). The mission of the PRN Website (www.usaprn.org) and Organization is to provide help and hope to addicted pharmacists and student pharmacists seeking recovery from their active disease; provide support to pharmacists and student pharmacists in recovery from their chronic disease; and to educate and inform the profession of pharmacy that those within the profession, are at risk for chemical dependency for reasons including: increased stress and burnout and easier access to drugs.

Previous studies have been conducted that included one state, a region, and/or all healthcare professionals. No studies have evaluated a more national area and included only the recovering/addicted pharmacist in the state PRN organization. The purpose of this study is to include a larger national population of the recovering/addicted pharmacist in the PRN from their respective state with either a background in retail, institutional, or both throughout their past or current pharmacy career.

OBJECTIVE
The objective of this survey was to assess whether the prevalence of the addicted pharmacist is greater in a retail practice setting compared to an institutional practice setting.

PROCESS
A survey, consisting of 25 questions (eight of which were optional demographic), was uploaded onto an anonymous survey site. The link for the survey was then sent out to the PRN presidents via e-mail for each of the nine states. The PRN presidents then forwarded the e-mail to their clients.

RESULTS
The survey was sent to 697 participants in which 171 (25%) responded. 95% (164 out of 171) of participants specified the pharmacy setting in which they were practicing while abusing drugs or alcohol were either in retail, institution, or both. Of those 95%, 66% (109 out of 164) were practicing in a retail setting, 20% (32 out of 164) were practicing in an institutional setting, and 14% (23 out of 164) were practicing in both settings. Seventy-eight percent of participants actively diverted drugs from the pharmacy they were employed in. Sixty-nine percent of those that practiced in an institutional setting were involved in drug waste-disposal.

CONCLUSION
Addiction is a disease due to loss of control over substance, and activation of the reward pathway. Based on the results of this study, it was found that pharmacists in a retail setting were more likely to suffer from addiction, due to a high level of stress, pain, or depression/anxiety. Many of these pharmacists continued to practice while in the active stage of their disease. While in practice, a majority of these individuals were intervened upon in order to help them get proper treatment for their disease, less than one-third willingly went to treatment. Currently, PRN and a 12-step program, such as AA or NA, coupled with a support system comprised of family, friends, and spiritual beliefs, are utilized to help further the recovery of these pharmacists.

REFERENCES