LEARNING WITHIN AN ONLINE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE
FOR LOCUM PHARMACISTS

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Aim
To determine the learning value of an online community of practice to locum community pharmacists in the UK.

Study design
Two months’ posts from an online chatroom created for UK locum community pharmacists were analysed in 2016.

Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Central Lancashire, UK. Anonymised text was analysed using a novel method that integrated Bales’ interaction process analysis and thematic analysis.

Results
Small, temporary social groups were created online, which met definitions for communities of practice. Posters were forming identity as pharmacists via their interactions in the following ways:

- **Value making** – sharing opinions and views on what it means to be a pharmacist
- **Creating a common culture** – ‘thinking like a pharmacist’
- **Sharing information** – supporting a joint opinion-forming base that develops ideas on pharmacy practice
- **Community formation** – helping develop common language and values where ideas can be shared

Conclusion
The study showed the chatroom was composed of an engaged, respectful, vibrant and sometimes challenging group of individuals discussing pharmacy issues online. It demonstrates the value of online networking to development of professional identity, culture and knowledge.