Chicago College of Pharmacy Student is Second Runner-Up at APhA-ASP National Patient Counseling Competition

Second-year pharmacy students don’t often get the opportunity to represent the Chicago College of Pharmacy (CCP) at a national competition. That didn’t stop Veeral Vyas, a second-year pharmacy student (PS-II), from trying to earn that chance earlier this year at the on-campus Patient Counseling Competition sponsored by the American Pharmaceutical Association – Academy of Student Pharmacists (APhA-ASP) chapter of CCP. Much to his surprise, he won this competition. This allowed him to advance to the APhA-ASP National Patient Counseling Competition in Los Angeles in March 2013, where he placed second runner-up from among 120 fellow pharmacy student contestants from all over the country.

“At our campus competition, I didn’t think I placed at all because the PS-III students have more therapeutic knowledge than I do,” said Veeral. The winner of the campus competition moves on to the national level of competition, which is made up of one representative from nearly every school of pharmacy in the country.

“I had great support from the CCP faculty in getting ready for nationals,” explained Veeral. “Drs. Cornell, Chapman, and Stensland provided me with ongoing encouragement as I prepared and competed.”

“We are so proud of his accomplishment, especially in having achieved it as a PS-II student,” said Nancy Fjortoft, Ph.D., Dean of CCP. “He’s such a natural at this, and he will be a really effective and compassionate pharmacist when he graduates.”

Veeral explains, “Although I am a PS-II student, anyone can do this. The only thing I may have had to do differently is utilize my resources. With a weakness such as therapeutic knowledge, I went to my upperclassmen and picked their brains.” Veeral credits PS-III student Ammel Mahmood with encouraging him to participate as a PS-II student. He added, “She said to me, ‘Being a P3 is not what makes you a good counselor, nor does it make you a good communicator. As long as you utilize your resources for your opportunities, and build on your strengths, you can do anything you set your mind to.’”

When asked about returning next year, he answered, “Yes! I definitely plan on entering this competition next year. Second runner-up is not enough. I have a sense of pride in my school and know that we deserve a first-place award.”

Veeral Vyas, CCP PS-II student, receives his second runner-up award from Amy Holland, Director of Pharmacy Recruiting at CVS Caremark, at the APhA-ASP National Patient Counseling Competition.
Language barriers and socioeconomic conditions have hampered access to quality healthcare for many Asian Americans living in Chicago’s Chinatown community. The Midwest Asian Health Association (MAHA) offers healthcare services in the neighborhood, but experienced a lack of regular volunteers of licensed physicians fluent in Mandarin and/or Cantonese to offer free screenings, lab tests, and consultations to the area’s residents.

In April of 2012, these challenges were addressed by students and faculty at Midwestern University’s Chicago College of Pharmacy (CCP). Eager to serve the community and gain more experience in working with patients under the supervision of faculty, students involved in the campus organization Asian Healthcare Association (AHA) now regularly visit this Chinatown clinic on a monthly basis. During these visits, they meet with patients and interpret lab results. The students then translate all results into Mandarin and/or Cantonese, so that patients can fully understand their healthcare needs, including culturally appropriate remedies, preventative measures, and healthy lifestyles.

“This has been a terrific opportunity for our students who are fluent in these languages and understand the culture to actively participate in the delivery of healthcare and make a difference in these peoples’ lives,” said Sheila Wang, Pharm.D., BCPS AQ-ID, Associate Professor of Pharmacy Practice, and the faculty advisor to this CCP student organization. “And in a few cases, the students have developed their own research projects that focus on health concerns that disproportionately impact the Asian American population.”

Formally known as the Asian Community Health Education Initiative (ACHEI), this project’s effectiveness in reaching this underserved population is gaining attention. Last year, the initiative received the 2012 Community Service Award presented by the MAHA. And this past summer, this group was the recipient of the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP) Student Community Engaged Service Award. At AACP’s annual meeting, student leader Vinvia Leung presented the ACHEI project where she discussed the project’s success, how the organization will expand its work and efforts, and its current impact on the community.

The initiative has built strength quickly as first- and second-year pharmacy students shadow their third- and fourth-year counterparts in the translations of the lab results and screenings, and later the consultations with patients. And according to Dr. Hong Liu, Executive Director of the MAHA, “Based on the continual return of patients for consultations and direct feedback from patients, the project is well received and appreciated by the Chinatown community.”
A Student’s Perspective: Third-Year Inspiration

By Andrea Beall, PS-III Student

After two years at Midwestern, I believe I found my niche as a clinical pharmacist with the help of my third-year rotation. Each year, pharmacy students have the opportunity to learn outside of the classroom by going on rotations for one day each week for 10 weeks. This means shadowing a pharmacist (known as a preceptor) as they go through a normal work day. As a first-year student, we are assigned to a community pharmacy like CVS or Walgreens. As a second-year student, we are assigned to a hospital pharmacy; and as a third-year, we are assigned to a clinical pharmacy setting.

I liked my first- and second-year rotations, but I was most eager for my clinical rotation this year. I was assigned to Dreyer Medical Center in Aurora. My assigned preceptor is a faculty member at Midwestern, Dr. D’Souza, who teaches diabetes in the first couple of weeks in the third-year therapeutics course. At Dreyer Medical Center, she works alongside other clinical pharmacists to optimize therapy for patients with chronic diseases like diabetes, hypertension, and high cholesterol. I work part time at Osco Pharmacy, so most of my knowledge is from a community pharmacy with a focus on dispensing. This rotation was a whole new experience for me.

After recently learning more about diabetes, hypertension, and high cholesterol, I was eager to put my knowledge to use. I was able to observe Dr. D’Souza and some fourth-year pharmacy students interview patients about their diet, exercise habits, as well as review lab values and effects of their medications. Most of the patients are referred to the pharmacists by their doctors to better manage such things as their A1c, blood glucose levels, blood pressure, and lipid panel. Learning the goal numbers and therapy options from therapeutics allowed me to offer suggestions, ask questions, and understand concerns. With one patient, Dr. D’Souza increased his insulin injection numbers since his A1c number was not within goal. Another older gentleman with all three chronic disease states had leg pain. In therapeutics, we learn that along with medication, lifestyle changes need to be made like increasing exercise and changing the diet. These rotations allow us to see patients not as cases on an exam, but as a unique people.

When the quarter ended, I did not want to leave the site. Not only did I gain more friends, but I was also able to learn from the fourth-years and work with one of my favorite professors. I look forward to what my fourth-year rotations have in store for me, as I take on a more definitive role in patient-centered care.

Students Collaborate with Their Preceptor and Impact Patient Care Procedures

Impacting procedure changes in a hospital emergency department is no small task. But it started out as one when fourth-year CCP students Jenan Dailey and Christina Choi started their off-campus rotation/training module with Deborah Rehder, Pharm.D., a preceptor/adjunct assistant professor at Rush-Copley Medical Center in Aurora, IL.

In the beginning, these students were asked to do a literature search on the topic of medication reconciliations performed by pharmacists in Emergency Departments (E.D.). Then through collaboration with their preceptor, benchmark research, a pilot program launch, and follow-up studies, they ultimately influenced changing the admitting procedures at this suburban hospital and showcased their project in a poster presentation at the recent American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) Midyear Clinical Meeting in Las Vegas.

“Our preliminary data revealed emergency room nurses’ lack of confidence in gathering accurate patient medication information,” explained Dr. Rehder. “Hence E.D. medication reconciliations were often deleted and begun all over again. Physicians cannot evaluate patient treatment accurately without correct information. An accurate patient medication history upon admission allows

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Students Collaborate with Their Preceptor cont’d

more cost-effective patient care.” In the students’ pilot program, pharmacy students completed the medication histories in the emergency room, which were then handed-off to the patient’s nurse. The study proposed an increase in pharmacists’ roles in direct patient care upon admission, medication information counseling, and discharge education.

“As we were working on the initial literature review, I realized how important this topic was for patients and for pharmacists,” said Ms. Dailey. “At the time, I did not realize how big the project would become. With each phase of our research, we evaluated the impact of the project and looked for areas to expand and improve,” Along with Christina Choi, the third primary investigator was PS-IV student Yvonne Duong.

The total student collaboration with Dr. Rehder evolved over five months. Additional student investigators included fellow CCP PS-IV students Zachary Thomas Speckman, Gregory Reed Smith, Long Quoc Nguyen, and Jason Dudek. During this five months, the program expanded from the emergency room to the hospital’s inpatient units.

“This procedure provided interdisciplinary communication between nursing and pharmacy. Pharmacy students’ Medication Reconciliations in the ED gathered an average of 7.4 medications per patient, versus nursing’s 4.7 medications. Nursing units and physicians are extremely receptive to the program and agree that pharmacists are more knowledgeable about drug availabilities, dosages, compatibilities, interactions, and side effects,” commented Dr. Rehder.

She adds, “The students were all an absolute delight to work with. Their enthusiasm and dedication to improving patient outcomes was inspiring. The students involved in the project truly enjoyed participating in direct patient care. They are pioneers in establishing new multidisciplinary relationships. They collaborated well with each other and presented themselves as a team.”

“Dr Rehder facilitated an environment that was open to new ideas and change,” summarizes Ms. Dailey. “As students, we were given the opportunity to develop our patient care skills and expand the role of pharmacy practice in the hospital. I was, however, most surprised to find that on our very first fourth-year rotation module, we as students could make a difference in patient care.”

Calendar

PharmCAS online application, fees and transcripts due - January 5, 2014
Dual Acceptance Program applications due - February 15, 2014
Supplemental applications and fees, PCAT scores and Letters of Recommendations due to MWU Office of Admissions - March 1, 2014

Contact Us

For any questions relating to your application and/or admission, please call the Midwestern University Office of Admissions at 800/458-6253 or admisss@midwestern.edu.

Featured by ASHP

Christie Schumacher, Pharm.D., BCPS, BC-ADM, CDE, Assistant Professor in Pharmacy Practice at CCP, was profiled in the May 9, 2013, issue of the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists’ (ASHP’s) InterSections, a quarterly national magazine that connects members of the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists through articles addressing the challenges and rewards of pharmacy practice in hospitals and health systems. Her unique contributions are highlighted in the article, which discusses Advocate Medical Group’s patient-centered medical home (PCMH).

The full article can be found at: http://www.ashpintersections.org/2013/05/pharmacist-involvement-integral-to-medical-home-at-advocate-health/

Derek Griffing, Pharm.D., MPH, CCP alumnus from the Class of 2010, was profiled in the November 15, 2013, issue of ASHP’s Pharmacy News, which provides insight and analysis into various health-system pharmacy topics on a regular basis. His work on the shaping of health care reform on Capitol Hill was highlighted.

The full article can be found at: http://www.ashp.org/menu/News/PharmacyNews/NewsArticle.aspx?id=3974
An additional profile can be found here: http://www.pharmacy.vcu.edu/sub/prospective/postgrad/publicpolicy/alumni/2012fellow.aspx