Students’ Summer Internship and Research Experiences

Our Chicago College of Pharmacy (CCP) students have summer breaks after their first and second years in the curriculum. Many students take advantage of this time to participate in internships or research opportunities to maximize their real-world pharmacy experiences. This helps guide them when choosing classroom and rotation electives later in the curriculum and prepares them to make informed career decisions.

We have featured a few of the numerous CCP students who participated in summer internship opportunities last summer, after either their PS-I and PS-II years (their current year in school is noted). Here, they talk about how their experiences are impacting their future pharmacy career paths and professional growth.

Kristel Apolinario, PS-III
Takeda Pharmaceuticals
Deerfield, IL

How did this experience differ from your rotation experiences?
The experiences were completely different, yet very similar at the same time. Initially, I was afraid I wouldn’t be able to use my clinical knowledge during the internship, but I found I was using it daily within the Medical Affairs department. Activities such as creating a competitor drug table and analyzing the safety and efficacy of therapeutic agents tested my ability to do literature searches and practice evidence-based medicine.

What did you like most about your internship?
The one-on-one meetings I had with full-time employees were absolutely my favorite thing to do while I was at Takeda. Aside from the projects and assignments given, the interviews I conducted had the greatest influence on my professional development. The company values the internship program and it shows. Emphasis is placed on the idea of growth, thus a majority of the employees have an open door policy with Takeda interns. So, in advance of assignments, I made appointments with individuals in various positions, responsibilities, and functions. Moving out of my comfort zone was something new, and I’m glad I did it. By the end of my internship, I made more than 20 exceptional contacts.

How did this experience help to shape your pharmacy career aspirations?
The Takeda internship has certainly confirmed that the pharmaceutical industry is where I see myself heading in the future. My objective was to discover the opportunities the pharmaceutical industry provides for Pharm.D. graduates. Having completed the program, I understand that the pharmaceutical industry not only allows for upward advancement, but demands adaptability as well.

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A Student’s Perspective:
How I Spent My Summer Vacation
By Dean Brock, Second-year Pharmacy Student

Last summer, I had the privilege of working as a teaching assistant for the Careers in Pharmacy (CIP) Program. The CIP Program was an opportunity for high school juniors to come to Midwestern University and experience various lectures, workshops, and activities to obtain a basic understanding about pharmacy and see if it is a good fit for them as they make college decisions.

Working as a teaching assistant (TA) was one of the most rewarding jobs I have ever had. As a TA, I designed a pharmaceutical calculations PowerPoint® presentation and provided lectures for the students. I have always had an interest in teaching, and I saw the TA position as a prime opportunity to see if I might pursue academia as a career option after I finish earning my Pharm.D. degree.

I must admit that I was quite nervous to teach my first lecture. However, I know that I need to challenge myself and step out of my comfort zone. I rehearsed each lecture every morning. While I was nervous internally, I was told that it did not show externally as I taught the students. I was lucky to have intelligent and hardworking students in the program, because they made teaching both fun and educational for me.

Not only did I get to do lectures for the students, but I also had the opportunity to interact with the students in various workshops and hands-on activities. During the asthma workshop, I was able to interact with the students and show them how to utilize spacers and chambers with the metered dose inhalers. In addition, I was able to assist the students with their Mock Pharmacy Experience in which they researched drug interactions, typed a prescription label, and filled a prescription.

Since last summer’s program, I can say with absolute certainty that I would like to pursue an academic career in pharmacy. I plan to do an academic rotation during my fourth year of pharmacy school and apply to a residency program that has a focus on academia. I truly enjoyed teaching and interacting with the students in the program. I hope that all of them have successful careers in pharmacy or whichever career path they choose to follow.

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Sharon Karina, PS-III
Northwestern Memorial Hospital
Chicago, IL

What did you do in this internship? This was a self-directed research project, which involved analyzing articles and studies performed by consulting firms and applying the findings to the practice of pharmacy. I also looked at trends in admissions to pharmacy schools in the U.S. related to gender. The paper was written with Dr. Desi Kotis, Director of Pharmacy at Northwestern Medicine, to assess ways the pharmacy curriculum could better prepare women moving into the field and encourage leadership development, while also recognizing barriers to upward mobility.

How did you achieve this opportunity? This was the direct result of networking. I learned about Dr. Kotis through a leadership program I attended, and I reached out to her to learn about leadership activities she was currently doing with ASHP. She and I discussed some challenges that pharmacists face and the growing gender gap in administrative roles. She later offered me this unique opportunity to participate in research as a first author, and currently our paper is in peer review.

What did you enjoy most about this opportunity? This was not a traditional pharmacy bench-research experience. I am personally interested in pharmacy business-related issues, such as strategy and operations management.

How did this experience help to shape your pharmacy career aspirations? It showed me there are other non-traditional paths I could pursue once I earn my Pharm.D. degree. I had some concerns that perhaps I needed to consider earning an M.B.A. after my Pharm.D.—and I may still do that. However, seeing all of the research in pharmacy education and hospital administration has given me some new ideas about where to take my career after graduation.

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Andrew Bolis, PS-II
Jewel/Osco/Albertson’s
Arlington Heights, IL; corporate office in Franklin Park, IL

What did you enjoy most about your opportunity?
As an intern, I enjoyed the real life application of what I was learning in pharmacy school. The best part was counselling patients and answering their questions regarding their medications. Also, working 40 hours a week allowed me to become close to the team at my base store. They all treated me with respect and helped me grow in my knowledge of the community pharmacy setting. I finally felt like I was a healthcare professional and someone on the way to becoming an expert in my field of practice.

In addition to your day-to-day tasks as an intern, what were some of the other activities that you did?
There was a clinical skills workshop, where we became familiar with various clinical skills used in the pharmacies. This included blood pressure screenings, blood glucose readings, cholesterol screenings, and A1C readings. This was my favorite activity as we were able to practice in a comfortable environment, and it allowed me to become familiar with techniques that I had never practiced before.

The eight-week internship concluded with a presentation for our peers and members of the corporate staff. This presentation was about a business model where we had to analyze the strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats presented at our base store. Then based on these variables, we had to create a potential solution that could help increase revenue. In my case, I chose to speak about increasing patient awareness of their own health as a tool to increase yearly immunization shots.

How did this experience help to shape your pharmacy career aspirations?
This experience helped me realize exactly how important pharmacists are to the healthcare team. After finishing the internship, I have stayed on with the Jewel/Osco Pharmacy. I have plans to either work as a staff pharmacist for them upon graduation or pursue a community residency. I want to be able to work with the public, share my knowledge, and educate patients to become more aware of their own health so they have the steps needed to stay healthy.

What advice would you give to students who are considering a career in pharmacy?
The world of pharmacy is changing and is driven mainly by the interests of the patients as they become more aware of their health, especially with easier access to healthcare and literature. Absorb as much information as you can from your fellow peers, professors, and supervisors, and do not forget to become the best version of yourself that you can be. Times will change. So be aware of current events and how they might impact the healthcare field. Keep adapting and preparing for whatever changes lie ahead.

Sumaira Naushineen, PS-III
Walgreens
Wilmette, IL; corporate office in Woodridge, IL

What did you do in this internship?
During this internship, I reached out to various offsite locations to set up flu clinics for the upcoming flu season; I assisted the pharmacist with inventory control; and completed a group project/presentation. My favorite part of the internship was the weekly field trips. We visited Walgreens flagship stores and a Walgreens located inside a hospital setting. We also took a trip to the Walgreens distribution center located in Windsor, WI. I had the opportunity to help with remodeling a Walgreens store in Wheeling, IL. In doing so, we organized the pharmacy in order to ease the transition for the new technology that was being installed.

What did you enjoy most about your opportunity?
This internship provided networking opportunities. We have always been taught that pharmacy is a small world, and I may be working with these people again in the future.

How did this experience differ from your rotation experiences?
My internship experience differed because I was able to work with pharmacy and management students from all over our Illinois region. This allowed me to learn about community pharmacy practice from various perspectives, and how we can work together to achieve desired outcomes. I was also allowed to counsel patients under the pharmacist’s supervision, conduct blood pressure readings, and attend an area meeting led by our district manager. During this time, I learned how metrics are analyzed and how we can use those results in order to do better. I would say that my community pharmacy rotation experience is just a general overview of the pharmacy, while this internship taught me the fine details.

How did this experience help to shape your pharmacy career aspirations?
I was in the pharmacy for 40 hours per week. So, I learned more about the job responsibilities that both a pharmacy manager and pharmacist have. My manager went above and beyond to teach me everything she could during the 12 weeks. She allowed me to take new prescriptions, contact doctors if there was a change needed to therapy, and do transfers.

At the end of the summer, I was offered a year-round intern position at this Wilmette location, which I gladly accepted.
Student Research Poster Presentations

Numerous CCP students participate in research opportunities with faculty members. The result of some of their work is reflected in the 35 posters that were accepted at the recent American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) Clinical Midyear Meeting in Las Vegas, NV. Listed below are the posters presented by students who authored these research investigations under the mentorship of various Midwestern University faculty members. CCP students are noted in bold.


Biskup B, Graff J, Jhlenfeldt J. “Medication use evaluation of corticosteroids in the neonatal intensive care unit.”

Chang J, Jain H, Griffin B, Scheetz M, Joshi M. “Development of a simple, rapid, accurate, and precise method for measuring vancomycin concentrations in rat pup kidneys using high-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) with UV detection.”

Chen T, Wenzel R. “Hazards of computerized default medication administration times.”


DePatis K, McLaughlin M, Kliethermes MA, Quinones-Boex A, Kolanyczk D, Schmidt J, Tran T, Vest KM. “Factors influencing fourth year pharmacy student pursuit of research.”

Hoang A, Vest KM. “A literature review of the emphasis of adherence in asthma education programs.”


Jain H, Chang J, Griffin B, Scheetz M, Joshi M. “Liposomal encapsulation of vancomycin for reduced nephrotoxicity.”

Jeziorski D, Leonard M, Berube BJ, Hauser AR, Rhodes NJ. “Evaluating the time-course of Pseudomonas aeruginosa killing in the presence of various azithromycin concentrations.”

Kapolas C, Fawas Z, Arif S, Harpe S. “Effects of Providing Medication Reconciliation Services on Pharmacy Student Knowledge and Attitudes at a Large Academic Medical Center.”


Lam A, Muron J, Shah A. “Pharmacist implementation in independent physician offices to perform clinical pharmacy services to help Medicare patients.”

Contact Us

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